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Bringing the News to North Korea

Kongdan Oh Hassig

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PREFACE

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Outside IDA, Dr. Ralph C. Hassig, my husband and research partner, deserves much credit for his contributions to the research and writing of this report. The document is an extended version of policy suggestions in our recently co-authored book, *North Korea through the Looking Glass* (Brookings Institution Press, 2000).

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SUMMARY

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK or North Korea) is considered to pose nuclear and missile threats to the United States and its allies. It has also been accused of drug manufacture and trafficking, counterfeiting, sponsorship of terrorism, and gross violations of human rights. Until the DPRK's Kim Jong-il regime is replaced, the Korean peninsula is likely to remain a trouble spot. Overt intervention in North Korea's affairs is not a viable option given the DPRK's strength and unity. Another option is to change the Kim regime by destabilizing it from within.

North Korean society is communist in form but feudal in practice. Kim Jong-il is the only true power holder, ruling over all aspects of society by his personal authority and only secondarily by the numerous party and government positions he occupies.

Aid from capitalist countries, primarily the United States, Japan, and the ROK, has supplemented Chinese aid and kept the Kim regime afloat. The legacy of Confucianism helps explain the submissiveness of the people in the face of great economic hardships. Despite widespread suffering and frustration since the death of Kim Il-sung in 1994, there have been no signs of any domestic uprising, protest, or revolt, although repeated calls in the press for improved morale, collectivist spirit, and social order suggest a failing in the government's indoctrination and social control measures.

Since 1962 the Four Military Lines have specified that all the people be armed and the entire country be fortified, and Kim Jong-il has tried to keep the military at a fever pitch by touting the imminent danger of war with the United States. No reports of military revolts by dissatisfied soldiers have reached Western ears, but in the 1990s rumors of coup attempts by the officers corps have occasionally surfaced.

This paper presents background and suggestions for an information campaign to weaken the Kim Jong-il regime by strengthening the North Korean people with information and ideas. Intermediate policy goals include communicating the ideas of democracy and capitalism to the North Korean people and changing their negative attitudes toward the United States. The means to accomplish these goals include providing information to the North Korean people about their country and about the

outside world. The final outcome of such a campaign would presumably be the collapse of North Korea as a separate state into the arms of South Korea.

A. KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEFS

The starting point for designing an information campaign targeting the DPRK is to assess what North Koreans know and believe. Information is tightly controlled and the dissemination of information is uneven through different strata of North Korean society. Large gaps exist between the knowledge levels of the masses and the top cadres, who are on the distribution list of the government's *Reference News*. These cadres know virtually everything of importance about conditions inside and outside the DPRK, but they have little direct experience with either the hard life of the masses or the ideas and lifestyles of foreign lands. Kim Jong-il, an avid viewer of international TV and foreign movies, knows more than most, but he does not speak English and has never visited a Western country. Among the masses, knowledge of the outside world appears to be fragmentary. Very few North Koreans have traveled beyond the country's borders.

B. THE TRADITIONAL COMMUNICATION MODEL

Knowledge of communication principles can aid in designing an information campaign targeted at North Korea. The traditional model analyzes communication according to "source," "message," "medium" (or "channel"), and "audience," with audience feedback providing a means of determining effect. Persuasion is seen as a multi-step process that uses the first three factors to move the audience through a series of stages from attention to comprehension to acceptance to remembering and finally to action.

The importance of source characteristics on persuasion is illustrated by countless examples of charlatans who have misled their followers and marketers who have sold their products in a crowded marketplace. Results of hundreds of studies have highlighted two significant source factors: credibility and attractiveness. Considerations in choosing channels of communication into North Korea include accessibility, impact, capacity, cost, and resistance to interference. The channel choices are personal contact, written materials, telephone, internet, radio, and television. Messages can communicate news, opinion, and cultural teaching. "Market basket" information was very persuasive during the cold war in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. For all but the most

thoughtful audiences, emotional presentations are more persuasive than rational ones. A few strong themes communicated repeatedly are most effective in reaching a specific communication goal.

The North Korean audience could be segmented in several ways. North Koreans in country could be targeted separately from North Koreans in China or Russia. The North Korean elite could be targeted separately from the masses, or the young from the old. Segments differ in how receptive they are to different messages and how reachable they are by different channels.

International radio, especially shortwave radio, is an effective channel for broadly communicating information. One North Korean defector has said, "If someone asked me to do something for reunification, giving me enough resources, I would ship more than 10 million small radios to the North in the first place. The North Korean audience is targeted by the Voice of America (VOA), Radio Free Asia (RFA), the ROK's Far Eastern Broadcasting, ROK domestic radio stations, and several Christian stations. The BBC does not broadcast in Korean. VOA's Korean programs presenting world news and U.S. views are aired from 6:30-7:00 a.m. and 10:00-11:00 p.m. Korean time on shortwave frequencies and one medium-wave (AM) frequency. RFA's Korean broadcasts provide Korean and world news and features from 7:00-8:00 a.m. and 11:00-12:00 p.m. Korean time. North Korean jamming is not completely effective.

C. PRINCIPLES OF PERSUASION

Cognitive response psychology illuminates ways that people actively respond to communications they closely pay attention to and how they are influenced by the much greater number of communications that are received "peripherally." North Koreans are inundated by propaganda designed to secure loyalty and boost morale but they receive very little hard news. Persuasion techniques based on cognitive principles include playing on friendship, appealing to authority and/or expertise, socially validating messages, invoking scarcity, appealing to self interest, and triggering needs for commitment and consistency. These techniques can be employed to persuade the North Korean people that they have been lied to and misled by their leaders.

Since North Korea is similar to a national cult, a study of the psychology of cults may provide some insight into the psychology of North Koreans and consequently aid in formulating methods to broaden or change their minds and prepare them for integration into the international community. Differences between membership in cults and

citizenship in the DPRK are obviously great, but in both cases individuals are isolated from the larger community and are constantly bombarded with ideological propaganda centered on a quasi-divine leader. Cult studies also illuminate the difficulties that former cult members face in the outside world. An important goal of communicating with North Koreans is to prepare them to accept new ideologies and new norms after the demise of their socialist society.

D. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The North Korean people are seriously deprived of domestic and foreign information. As a champion of freedom of the press, the United States could well consider it a duty to assist in providing the North Korean people with a free press, but Washington is unlikely to take up this mission unless other goals such as nuclear and missile nonproliferation can be enlisted to support an information campaign. Since it is not immediately obvious how such goals can be achieved by providing North Koreans with a freer press, the emphasis of U.S. foreign policy has heretofore been on dealing with the Kim regime and bypassing its people.

One factor that greatly complicates U.S. foreign policy toward North Korea is that South Korea is the country most directly affected by conditions in the DPRK. In the long term the goals of the ROK and the United States in regard to North Korea are compatible. Both governments wish to see democracy and market principles developed in the North in preparation for Korean unification. In the short term, however, the two governments have somewhat different concerns. The primary U.S. objectives are to eliminate the North's nuclear and missile programs. The primary ROK objectives are to avoid war and pursue national reconciliation.

The ultimate goal of American and South Korean engagement with North Korea is to transform the North into a peaceful and democratic society. Such a transformation could be achieved if engagement changed Kim Jong-il's attitudes toward governance and foreign policy. The transformation could also be achieved if engagement inspired the North Korean people to overthrow the Kim regime.

North Koreans are difficult to reach. Although person-to-person channels have the greatest impact and potential for transmitting the most information, the North Korean government exercises effective control over them. The channels that the United States can exercise most control over are foreign broadcasts and information accompanying the aid that has been solicited by the North Korean government.

Since the ROK and U.S. policy goals in North Korea are not identical, it would be wise for the United States to avoid engaging in overtly persuasive efforts toward North Korea, especially the kind that aim for an overthrow of the Kim regime or that might precipitate a social implosion; neither goal is desired by the current ROK government. A news and information approach would be less provocative.

Interestingly, neither VOA nor RFA devotes significant resources to their North Korean broadcasts despite the fact that North Korea is usually listed as a major threat to U.S. security and to the peace of Northeast Asia. In fact, Korean broadcasts receive the same resources as broadcasts to Burma and Laos. If North Korea is truly considered a security threat, it is time for the United States to reassess its allocation of these broadcast resources.

BRINGING THE NEWS TO NORTH KOREA

A. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Looking into the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK or North Korea) is difficult. Looking out is even more challenging. The Pyongyang government's security policy of isolating its people and treating most information as a state secret prevents outsiders from gaining a satisfactory view of conditions within this modern-day hermit kingdom and insiders from understanding what is happening in the world, and even in their own country.

For 50 years North Korea has been the target of a stringent U.S. containment policy. Put on the defensive, North Korea has taken a "don't tread on me" attitude that has gained it a reputation as a rogue state. Following its national policy of *Juche* (national pride and self-reliance), the DPRK has often refused to conform to international practices and accede to international agreements. The North Korean press fulminates against the international world order under the leadership of the major powers, insisting that all nations, whatever their size and strength, should have equal voting rights in the United Nations. North Korea was the first state to announce its withdrawal from the International Atomic Energy Agency's Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. It likewise announced its withdrawal from the United Nations' Human Rights Convention, another international first. In both cases, the withdrawals were subsequently suspended. On the economic front, the DPRK has been in default on its international debts since the mid-1980s. Its diplomats have been caught engaged in smuggling.

A state that lives outside international conventions is a threat to those countries such as the United States that champion those conventions. The DPRK poses more specific threats as seen from the American perspective. First on the list are Pyongyang's nuclear and missile programs. The nuclear program is ostensibly frozen by the 1994 Agreed Framework but the agreement was not designed for the long term and is constantly in danger of failing. The DPRK's missile launch program is temporarily frozen pending talks with the United States in which substantial payment is demanded for a continuation of the freeze.

Before the North's nuclear program became a matter of concern, its conventional military threat toward South Korea preoccupied U.S. policy makers. Although the Korean People's Army retains the capacity to inflict heavy damage on the South, the ROK (South Korean) defenses appear to be a match for DPRK forces even without the aid of U.S. troops, and every year the South Korean forces grow relatively stronger. In any case, as North Korea becomes more dependent on South Korea and on Western aid donors, the chances of a southward invasion markedly diminish.

The DPRK poses other threats to the United States and the international community. Drug manufacture and trafficking, counterfeiting, sponsorship of terrorism, and gross violations of human rights can all be blamed directly on the secretive and unpredictable Kim regime. Until this regime is replaced, the DPRK is likely to remain a trouble spot. Overt intervention in North Korea's affairs along the lines of a Kosovo operation is not a viable option given the DPRK's strength and unity. Thus the best course for changing the Kim regime is to destabilize it from within.

An understanding of current conditions in the DPRK provides a starting point for assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the troublesome and oppressive Kim regime. When the North Korean people have access to valid information about the international community and about their own government, they will be in a better position to govern themselves and interact responsibly with the international community.

1. Politics

North Korean society is more closely modeled on George Orwell's 1984 than any society has ever been. It is communist in form but feudal in practice. The most stable institution, and also the premier governing organization, is the Korean Workers' Party (KWP), but even this organization is merely a tool of Kim Jong-il, who inherited his leadership position from his father. The party congress has not been convened since 1980 although the party's charter mandates a congress every 5 years. Kim became party chairman in October 1997 by "acclamation" rather than by election.

On the government side, the Supreme People's Assembly (SPA), in principle the highest governing body of the state, is a rubber stamp legislature that meets at the whim of Kim Jong-il even though the constitution provides for an election every 5 years. Eight years passed between the last meeting of the Ninth SPA and the election of the Tenth SPA in September 1998. When the Tenth SPA convened, the position of president was abolished in deference to the late President Kim Il-sung, and Kim Jong-il was reelected as

chairman of the National Defense Commission, which according to the constitution is the highest military organization. To represent the state in the absence of a president the former foreign minister, Kim Yong-nam, was elected to the new position of SPA presidium chairman ("president" in the press release to the foreign community). Chairman Kim immediately announced that "The office of the [National Defense] Commission chairman is a very important post; it is in charge of the whole of our political, military and economic powers and is the top post of the republic."¹ Leading the nation in the role of a military commander fits in well with Kim Jong-il's "military first" policy proclaimed in 1999, but it complicates diplomatic relations. The formal confusion about leadership in the DPRK suits Kim Jong-il's philosophy of foreign relations, according to which "The real state should be rendered unknown, as if Choson [North Korea] is shrouded in mist."² Kim has never met with the leader of a Western nation, has rarely traveled outside of the country (and then mostly to China), and has never given a public speech.

As is usual in one-party states, power and responsibility for governance are blurred between party and state, with most ruling figures holding simultaneous positions in both political institutions. In the DPRK this opaque governance is complicated (or simplified, according to one's view) by the fact that Kim Jong-il is the only true power holder, ruling over all aspects of society by his personal authority, and only secondarily by the numerous party and government positions he occupies. The challenge for North Korea's polity and society after the demise of Kim (who was born in 1942) is that Kim has not named a successor. Whereas institutional mechanisms are in place to elect new leaders in the party and government, the North Korean people have been taught that the top leader must be a special person, not simply an elected official. Kim Jong-il was secretly groomed by his father for many years before making his first public appearance in 1980 at the party congress, and for years after that he was mentioned in the press only as the "Party Center." He did not take his first government position (Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army) until 1991. Perhaps Kim is even now grooming his first son to succeed him. Kim Jong-nam has been made a member of the party's powerful Propaganda and Agitation Committee, which served as the springboard for his father's rise to power in the 1970s.

¹ "Kim Jong-il Era Dawns, with Military's Status Enhanced," *Vantage Point*, Volume 21, No. 9 (September 1988), p. 1.

² U, Chong-ch'ang, "'Kim Chong-il's Psychological Warfare' as mentioned by Kim Chong-il," *Wolgan Choson*, July 1, 2000, pp. 80-83.

2. Economy

After the North Korean economy was destroyed in the Korean War, Kim Il-sung imposed Stalinist tactics to rebuild heavy industry as the foundation for a self-sufficient state, making great economic gains throughout the 1960s. In the 1970s, typical socialist bottlenecks began to appear in the absence of a pricing mechanism to coordinate supply and demand. Lack of technology resulting from a combination of *Juche* self-reliance policies and the Western embargo compounded economic problems.

The North Korean standard of living peaked in the 1980s, but the underlying health of the economy was deteriorating many years before the collapse of trade, and aid relations with other socialist countries paralyzed the North Korean economy in the early 1990s. Beginning in 1984, minor economic reforms were instituted, all firmly within the realm of a centrally planned socialist economy. Predictably, none of these reforms attracted foreign investment or revived the economy, and people were forced to create their own black market economy to sell and barter household goods, agricultural surpluses, and materials pilfered from state industries.

Continued aid from China prevented a wholesale economic collapse, but operating rates of factories sank to 25 percent throughout the 1990s owing to severe shortages of equipment, materials, and energy, combined with low worker morale. National resources were diverted to keeping the military economy afloat. Severe floods in 1995 devastated agriculture, which was unable to revive because of weak infrastructure. As a result, several hundred thousand to several million people died of hunger between 1995 and 2000.

The highly secretive military economy continued to function, benefiting from its priority of resources. Most notably, the government continued to devote resources to its nuclear and missile programs in order to maintain a deterrence in times of economic weakness (in what would come to be called the *Kangsong Taeguk* or militarily and economically strong national movement) and to provide weapons for sale to Third World states or to be bought off by concerned Western powers.

In the 1990s, the national ideology of *Juche* was redefined as local and individual self-sufficiency as the government's central distribution system broke down. The Kim regime was willing to accept a "year zero" subsistence economy rather than abandon its economic and political principles.

Woefully short of domestic resources, the North Korean economy's health fell into the hands of foreign nations. Aid from capitalist countries, primarily the United

States, Japan, and the ROK, supplemented Chinese aid. When Kim Dae-jung became president of South Korea in 1999, he inaugurated an engagement policy that included substantial direct and indirect aid to North Korea with no strings attached. His promise not to undermine the North Korean system but rather to build it up in preparation for eventual reunification seems to have won over Kim Jong-il, who is inclined to accept South Korean aid and investment even while keeping his people largely isolated from these outside influences.

3. Society

The legacy of Confucianism helps explain two important features of contemporary North Korean society: the submissiveness of the people in the face of great hardship and their tolerance for a political caste system. Despite widespread suffering and frustration since the death of Kim Il-sung in 1994, there have been no signs of any domestic uprising, protest, or revolt. Immediately after Kim's death many foreign observers (unlike Korean defectors) predicted an imminent "social implosion" as demoralization was replaced by dissatisfaction. The absence of anything like an implosion warrants further consideration on the part of those who contemplate using propaganda to destabilize the Kim regime. The Confucian tradition of every person having his or her place in society helps explain this endurance, as does the lack of experience with any form of democracy. Other factors may play an explanatory role as well.

Although Kim Il-sung decided early on to open the KWP to as many citizens as were certified to be loyal, party membership is still limited to a minority (estimated to be 12 percent of the population at the last party congress in 1980).³ In 1958, Kim imposed a three-tiered society-wide classification system based primarily on loyalty to the communist regime, and the population has been reclassified eight times since then. The core class (*haeksim kyechung*), comprising 12 subgroups, includes approximately 30 percent of the population. These are the people presumed to be most committed to communism and most loyal to the Kim regime on the basis of their personal and family history, occupation, and performance. Laborers, people whose parents or grandparents fought against the Japanese, and those who gain access to the KWP are core class. Membership in the core class is the road to a university education and a good job.

³ Chung, Suk-hong, *Nam-Pukhan Bigyoron* [Comparative Studies of North and South Korea], (Seoul: Saram-gwa saram Publishing, 1997), p. 49.

In everyday matters such as housing, health services, and food distribution, core class members receive first consideration.

Members of the wavering class (*tong'yo kyechung*) are considered to be less than fully committed to communism but able to be won over by education and practice. They include about 50 percent of the population. These are typically people whose families in pre-communist days were merchants or small landowners. This group also includes people of otherwise good background whose relatives or families immigrated to South Korea during the period of separation or who arrived in North Korea from South Korea, China, or Japan. Members of the wavering class can live a bearable life but have little chance of joining the party or advancing into the higher ranks of society.

The quarter of the population classified as members of the hostile class (*joktae kyechung*) can in principle be remade into new communist citizens but in actuality they are written off. They live outside of Pyongyang, generally in rural areas; many of them have been officially banished to the roughest parts of North Korea, beyond the reach of government ration deliveries. They have been condemned to this classification by family history and, in some cases, by their own deeds. Families who in pre-communist days were wealthy landowners or capitalists, who worked for the Japanese colonial administration, or who were active in religious organizations or academia are included in this group. Those who have been accused of criticizing the Kim regime or who have committed serious crimes also fall into this category. The most unfortunate members of this group are the estimated 200,000 political prisoners who live and work in isolated camps—many with little hope of release. These people are treated as outcasts and live an animal-like existence.

Repeated calls in the press for improved morale, collectivist spirit, and social order suggest a failing in the government's indoctrination and social control measures. Just as the straightjacket of socialism has bred alternative economies, natural proclivities and the need to survive have created a parallel social universe in which people flout the rules by engaging in bribery, traveling without authorization, and committing all the crimes that the North Korean press attributes exclusively to capitalist societies. The political prisoners in gulags and the several million politically and economically disadvantaged rural residents in the northeast provinces live in what amounts to a separate society, but most North Koreans live part of the time as communists and part of the time as stealthy capitalists.

It appears that the police have the ability to root out most anti-communist activities but fail to do so because they are bribed and because they themselves must flout the rules to survive. However, any individual targeted by the police is likely to be apprehended. Thus most North Koreans, most of the time, are very careful about what they say, never knowing when they may come to the attention of the authorities. Punishment is frequently visited on an entire family, often extending to remote relatives, so individuals cannot live only for themselves.

4. Military

The promulgation of Kim Jong-il's "military first" policy in 1999 was nothing new: since 1962 the Four Military Lines have specified that the entire population be armed and the entire country be fortified. By the turn of the century, the DPRK was estimated to have dug over 8,000 underground installations collectively extending 500 kilometers, including factories and air fields.⁴ The army of over a million members (out of a population of 20 million) is backed up by about 5 million reserves. All able-bodied adults receive periodic military training. Children practice marching with wooden guns. Kim Jong-il's purported contribution to military strength is his emphasis on making the North Korean soldier ideologically strong, a "one is a match for a hundred" fighter.

The Korean People's Army (KPA) has always been much more than a fighting force. Soldiers are an important labor source for construction projects, lending a hand as well during planting and harvesting. A separate economy was established for the military. In the late 1990s, Kim Jong-il, frustrated with the stagnant civilian industry, reportedly began to give military commanders responsibility for running many civilian plants and farms. Military units also take responsibility for providing most of their food and housing needs by engaging in part-time building, farming, and fishing. The military is also the only organization with a sufficient number of operating vehicles to provide transport for large quantities of goods such as foreign food donations. Given the constraints imposed on the military in terms of equipment and living conditions for the soldiers, it is vital that the North Korean soldier be highly motivated. Kim Jong-il has tried to keep the military (as well as the entire country) at a fever pitch by touting the imminent danger of war with the United States. At his summit meeting with President Kim Dae-jung, Kim Jong-il commented that "the military indulges in useless thoughts if

⁴ Estimates of underground installations made by the ROK's Ministry of National Defense have been published in *Joongang Ilbo* (Internet version), December 8, 1998.

it is left idle.”⁵ The North Korean soldier, faced with hunger and disease and harried by concern for his family’s welfare, devotes much of his time to surviving.

The West has heard no reports of military revolts by dissatisfied soldiers among the lower ranks, who are as politically helpless as the civilian masses from which they come. The loyalty of officers, however, may be another matter. In the 1950s, and 1960s Kim Il-sung staged show trials to convict generals who were blamed for aiding the enemy during the Korean War and who resisted Kim’s “people’s defense” reforms of the 1960s. In the 1990s, rumors of the occasional military coup surfaced, most notably relating to a possible 1992 coup attempt by a group of officers who had been trained in the Soviet Union.

Kim Jong-il is touted in the press as a brilliant and courageous general although in fact he has no military experience. At the June 2000 summit meeting with Kim Dae-jung he ordered his top five generals to pour glasses of wine for his guest as a sign that they were firmly under his control. Some of these officers may resent Kim’s hereditary authority and like to see him deposed, perhaps in favor of his widely liked and respected younger brother whom Kim Jong-il keeps at distant ambassadorial posts.

Kim plays a careful balancing game with the military. He has boosted their status to gain their political support. By the end of the 1990s, he had personally promoted almost everyone in the general officers corps. Since the death of his father, top generals have risen in the national power hierarchy. Kim has also strengthened the party’s control and surveillance over the military.

The North Korean military is the pride of the country. It is touted as the strongest in the world on the basis of its ideological convictions. Its missile and nuclear potential have put the United States on the defensive. Its soldiers are held up as a model for all Koreans. Like Mao Zedong, Kim Il-sung believed that the army should be an army of the people in the sense that they should stay amongst the people, helping them and being helped by them. One of the constant themes in the North Korean media is the closeness of the military and the people, but the frequency of this boast suggests that perhaps the military is not so loved after all.

Defectors say that most North Korean soldiers live almost as miserably as civilians. Soldiers are drafted for 10- to 15-year stints during which they may receive

⁵ Kim, Min-sok, “Supporting Construction Projects Is Also Key Duty of the North Korean Army,” *Joongang Ilbo*, internet version, August 7, 2000.

only a couple of home leaves, and much of their work involves difficult civilian chores. While the higher echelon of the officers corps is considered a privileged class, most soldiers are as put upon as civilians and do not constitute a force for political change.

5. U.S. Policy Toward North Korea

Until the discovery of a North Korean nuclear reprocessing facility in 1989, Washington's cold war containment policy toward the DPRK appeared to be adequate to protect the security of the United States and its Northeast Asian allies. But with an operating reactor and reprocessing facility, the nuclear genie was out of the bottle and containment was no longer a viable option. The 1994 Agreed Framework did little to either change the official U.S. attitude toward the DPRK or significantly reduce the level of containment, but it did add a dimension of "limited engagement" with an agreement to provide North Korea with heavy oil and proliferation-resistant nuclear reactors in return for a freeze on the North's indigenous nuclear program.

The policy embodied in the framework agreement is no more sustainable than the former containment policy because the troublemaking character of North Korea has not changed. North Korea's secretiveness extends to its nuclear industry, which remains uninspected by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The DPRK's missile program is not covered by the framework. The Agreed Framework was never submitted to the U.S. Congress, which continues to be critical of it. North Korea's humanitarian disaster, beginning with floods in the summer of 1995, has added yet another problem to be addressed by U.S. policy makers, in this case by massive foreign aid. Since the mid-1990s North Korea has become the largest U.S. aid recipient in East Asia.

After the DPRK shot a long-range missile over Japan in August 1998 (apparently in an unsuccessful attempt to launch a satellite), taking the U.S. intelligence establishment by surprise, Congress demanded a review of the Clinton administration's North Korea policy. The president appointed former defense secretary William Perry to head the review, which in October 1999 produced a set of recommendations that were essentially a reprise of the Agreed Framework but this time aimed at freezing the North's missile program. The report proposed that if North Korea moved to "eliminate its nuclear and long-range missile threats" the United States would "normalize relations with the DPRK, relax sanctions . . . and take other positive steps"—that is, the same inducements offered, but never delivered, for freezing the DPRK's nuclear program in 1994. The North Koreans hesitated to send a high-level delegation to the United States to discuss the offer but they did agree to suspend missile tests while talks were pending.

When ROK opposition leader Kim Dae-jung became president in early 1999, he inaugurated an engagement policy toward the North. President Kim declared that the ROK would not seek to take over the DPRK and that economic aid and cooperation would be extended without requiring the North to reciprocate. He encouraged other nations, particularly the United States and Japan, to move forward with their own engagement policies toward the DPRK. The Kim Jong-il regime was initially hostile to President Kim's engagement policy, suspecting that it was a trick to destabilize North Korea, but for whatever reasons Kim Jong-il consented to a summit meeting with Kim Dae-jung in June 2000, at which time the two leaders agreed to pursue reconciliation. With a limited capability to conduct simultaneous diplomatic engagements, the North Koreans turned away from the United States and Japan and concentrated their attention on gaining economic gifts from South Korea.

Pyongyang has always considered time to be on its side in its dealings with other states. Negotiations move slowly at a pace set by the North Koreans, who expect to be rewarded for just showing up at meetings. Like the United States, Japan and the ROK find themselves offering economic aid up front in order to induce the stubborn and impoverished North Koreans to come out of their shell. Since the welfare of the North Korean people is of only secondary interest to their government, the Kim Jong-il regime can afford to drag out negotiations for months or years until other governments offer suitable incentives for agreements.

6. Enhancing North Korea Policy

If the United States is unwilling to live under the threat of the DPRK's weapons of mass destruction (WMD), however limited this threat may be, a more active engagement policy must be adopted. The North's WMDs are considered integral to its survival, just as American WMDs provide a cornerstone of U.S. defense. In dialogue with a delegation of South Korean media executives in August 2000, Kim Jong-il said, "My power comes from military power. I have two sources of power: The first is for all to unite single-heartedly, and the second is military power. Even when we are on good terms with foreign countries, we must have military power."⁶ The DPRK's missile sales are a major source of foreign earnings, although they earn only a small fraction of what U.S. arms sales contribute to the American economy. Pyongyang's nuclear deterrent keeps the United States from intervening militarily in North Korean affairs as it has done

⁶ Yonhap news agency report (Internet version), August 13, 2000.

in Haiti, Yugoslavia, and other states. The hostile posture of the DPRK toward the United States is necessary to maintain North Korean domestic cohesion and to drum up support for the "respected and beloved general Kim Jong-il." So long as the Kim regime stays in power and North Korea's goal is to function as a state independent of South Korea, there will be no end to the WMD threats.

Threats of violence or stricter embargoes against the regime are counter-productive, serving only to solidify domestic support. Moreover, they risk starting a second Korean war. Offering the regime inducements to eliminate its WMD capability is unrealistic, although paying for a temporary freeze of those programs as the United States has done in the Agreed Framework is a workable short-term solution.

The remainder of this paper is devoted to suggestions for weakening the Kim Jong-il regime by strengthening the North Korean people with information and ideas. Intermediate policy goals include communicating the ideas of democracy and capitalism to the North Korean people and changing their negative attitudes toward the United States. The means to accomplish these goals include providing information to the North Korean people about their country and about the outside world. The final outcome of such a campaign would presumably be the collapse of North Korea as a separate state into the arms of South Korea.

E. KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEFS

The starting point for designing an information campaign targeting the DPRK is to assess what North Koreans know and believe. Since information is tightly controlled in the DPRK and the dissemination of information is uneven through different strata of North Korean society, it is important to determine what the different segments of the population know and how committed they are to official ideology, which is the only political thought that is permitted expression.

1. *Juche* Ideology

Juche, the totalitarian ideology of North Korea, sets guidelines for all fields of endeavor, from education to farming to industry to poetry and music. No other nation in the modern world devotes as much of its resources to disseminating an official ideology.

Underlying the specific applications of *Juche* is the intention to use it to achieve the three goals of “social remodeling,” “nature remaking,” and “human remolding.”⁷

Juche ideology has evolved from a statement of nationalism in the mid-1950s to a script for the worship of Kim Jong-il at the turn of the century. Over the years *Juche* was elaborated to support the rule of the party and its supreme leaders, Kim Il-sung and his son. In the process of elaboration the practical aspect of the ideology was gradually replaced by the mythical. To the extent that *Juche* is, in the words of the North Koreans, “a compass showing the course for a country and its people to follow, a foundation on which an entire nation comes together in a wholehearted unity,” North Korea today is founded on and guided by lies. An important goal of communication should be to replace these lies with truth.

Kim Il-sung introduced the word *Juche* into North Korea’s political lexicon in a 1955 speech to KWP propaganda and agitation workers, calling on them to hew to the “Korean” way in pursuing socialism rather than slavishly copying Soviet communism. From hindsight it is apparent that an important underlying agenda of promoting the *Juche* theme of national self-reliance and pride was to provide Kim with a justification for removing those political competitors who were affiliated with political factions having ties to the Soviet Union, China, and South Korea. In succeeding years these people were purged.

Juche gradually took on other meanings as well. In the 1970s, the idea was expanded into a philosophy of man, introducing a break with Marxism-Leninism. It was proposed that man (rather than the economic conditions he encountered) determined the course of history and that, by following *Juche* as laid down by the Kims, people could become masters of their own destiny. Thus the irony that only by obeying the party could North Koreans consider themselves to be free. Another addition to *Juche* was the Confucian idea of the nation as a family under the guidance of the fatherly leader. In *Juche* jargon this is the idea of the “sociopolitical life,” a life allegedly more important than the physical life. In its extreme form *Juche* called on people to die in defense of the “headquarters of the revolution,” that is, the two Kims.

Kim Jong-il’s early claim to fame was his elaboration and systematization of the *Juche* ideology. It was in his personal interest to build up the reputation of his father and

⁷ Chon, Kyong-no, “Social Remodeling, Nature Remaking, and Human Remolding,” *Minju Choson*, August 1, 2000, p. 3.

the ruling Kim family, the better to justify his succession to the throne. The younger Kim began his career in the party's propaganda and agitation department, where he promulgated the idea of the "revolutionary view of the leader" according to which the leader (and his family) are super humans who rule by virtue of their special inherited qualities. "The ideology about the nature of a revolutionary view of the leader elucidates that the leader is not any individual, but one who possesses extraordinary traits and qualifications, which just any individual cannot have; because of this he holds an absolute status. . . Today [1994], the world's people are consistently envious of our people, calling our people the people blessed with the leader [Kim Il-sung]." ⁸

In the 1980s, slogans carved on trees in the area of the sacred Mount Paektu, where Kim Jong-il was said to have been born (although he was actually born in a military camp in Siberia) were "discovered." The slogans, said to have been written by Kim Il-sung's revolutionary followers during the early 1940s, speak of "the birth on Mount Paektu of the bright star, heir to General Kim Il-sung." Kim Il-sung, his first wife (Kim Jong-il's mother) and the baby Kim were styled the "three generals of Mount Paektu." Kim Il-sung's father (a pharmacist), along with Kim's great grandfather, were characterized as revolutionaries, thus making the Kim family a special revolutionary line destined to rule Korea.

In the 1990s, as communism was abandoned by most of North Korea's trading partners and the dependent North Korean economy duly suffered, *Juche* was called upon to explain how this reversal of Marxist-Leninist principles was possible. *Juche* emphasized the alleged uniqueness of North Korea, where socialism would prevail because, unlike other socialists, the Koreans were thoroughly indoctrinated in socialist principles. The phrase "socialism in our own style," borrowed from the Soviet Union's propaganda archives, was popularized in the press. From 1988, when Pyongyang hosted the socialist Thirteenth World Festival of Youth and Students that brought thousands of foreigners into the country, the press began to warn of the perils of the "yellow wind of imperialism" designed to confuse and mislead true socialists. Capitalist economies were depicted as dictatorial regimes run by a few plutocrats who enslaved the masses.

⁸ "The Nature and Originality of a Revolutionary View of the Leader," a dialogue broadcast by Pyongyang's Korean Central Broadcasting Network (KCBN), November 23, 1994; translated by FBIS-EAS-94-227 (November 25, 1994) and entitled "Dialogue on 'Revolutionary View' of Leader, pp. 37-38; quote from p. 37.

The logical consequence of relying on ideological indoctrination to pacify the starving and isolated North Korean people was to put them in a position of virtual war against the world. The people were enjoined to follow socialism to the bitter end, even if it meant death. North Korea's struggles were characterized as an "arduous march" similar to the campaign that Kim Il-sung and other guerrilla leaders waged for years against the Japanese. In the 1990s people were told to be "guns and bombs" to protect Kim Il-sung, and after his death, to protect Kim Jong-il, their only salvation. Even as the international atmosphere relaxed on the Korean peninsula, with the leaders of North and South Korea meeting in June 2000, the North Korean press continued to warn that Japan and the United States were preparing to wage war on the North Koreans, who must maintain their vigilance and undergo wartime sacrifices.

2. What the People Know

a. The Cadres

The degree to which official ideology is accepted will depend importantly on what information the people have about their own world and the outside world. Large gaps exist between the knowledge levels of the masses and the top cadres, defined here as the thousand or so government and party officials in Pyongyang who are on the distribution list of *Ch'amgo t'ongsin* [Reference News]. Some of the elite cadres even have the opportunity to travel outside the country to receive training or to conduct their official duties.

The assumption is made here that the elites know virtually everything of importance about the following topics: conditions outside the DPRK, North Korean history, the extent of repression inside the country, and domestic economic conditions. But having said this, a distinction should be made between having access to information about conditions and having experience with those conditions. The cadres know that capitalism is profitably pursued throughout most of the world, but they may not understand the principles of the "invisible hand." They must realize that the United States is the dominant world power but not understand what the economic and social sources of American strength are. They know that economic conditions are bad in their own country but do not have first-hand experience with the severe struggle for survival of millions of their hungry countrymen.

b. Kim Jong-il

Kim Jong-il is an avid viewer of international TV and foreign movies, but he does not speak English and has never visited a Western country. An important question is how much he can understand of the outside world without having directly experienced it. In regard to domestic conditions, despite overseeing a highly efficient intelligence system he is reportedly often kept in the dark about what goes on inside the country, thanks to subordinates who fear being reprimanded for bringing him bad news. Kim has been assiduous in making inspection tours throughout the country, especially to military installations, but these tours are carefully rehearsed by his hosts.

c. The Masses

Among the masses, knowledge of the outside world appears to be fragmentary. Very few North Koreans have traveled beyond the country's borders, with the exception of thousands who have crossed over into the border area of China for trading purposes. Thousands more have received visits or letters from pro-North Korean relatives in Japan, who presumably bring news of the Western world. News gained in this fashion is passed from one household to another, but none of this information comes from direct contact: even the visitors to the Chinese border areas see only a pale reflection of life in the developed countries. Realizing that a small amount of information about the outside world will seep through its borders, the North Korean government has sought to reduce the impact of such news by warning that what appears attractive in the outside world is nothing more than a facade covering a totally corrupt and dying capitalist society.

The masses also know relatively little about Korean history, including modern history. They do not know that Kim Il-sung failed to defeat the Japanese in Korea during the Second World War and thus did not liberate the Korean people. They do not know that North Korea launched the Korean War in which Kim Il-sung's forces had to be rescued by the Chinese. Likewise, they know little about the luxurious living standards of Kim and his son, of their government's foreign policy dealings, of North Korea's poor reputation in the international community, or of the degree to which North Korea has always been dependent on foreign aid for its survival.

The masses have first-hand experience with the economy in terms of struggling to survive in a centrally planned economy by bribery and black marketing, but they have no knowledge of macroeconomic issues or of the reasons for socialism's failure.

Rather, they presumably blame corrupt cadres, the American economic embargo, and foreign military threats for the sad state of the economy.

3. What the People Believe

If knowledge is the raw material that informs people's lives, beliefs are life's guiding principles. From cradle to grave North Koreans are exposed to a daily regimen of ideological education, much of which is inconsistent if not contradictory to reality as outsiders know it. An interesting question is to what degree North Koreans believe in their official ideology. Specifically, what do the cadres, Kim Jong-il, and the masses believe about these major dimensions of *Juche* ideology: (1) socialism, (2) *Juche* national self-reliance and independence, (3) people as the masters of society, (4) the importance of the socio-political life, (5) the revolutionary view of the leader, (6) the personality cults of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il, and (7) the future of socialism.

a. The Cadres

The cadres have the opportunity to gather information about the outside world and, on the basis of that, formulate their own political philosophy. Of course they have no freedom to voice any philosophy that diverges from the official Kim Jong-il line. *Juche* is used as a tool for controlling the masses, but like any ideology it can be a double-edged sword. In the words of Christenson et al., ideology "captures and is captured by leaders."⁹

The elite may believe in socialism as a utopian ideal but probably see little hope of realizing it in the foreseeable future. With their limited knowledge of the outside world they realize that North Korea is virtually the last country trying to make socialism work, and if they examine their lives filled with bribery and black marketeering they must be aware that they themselves are poor socialists.

The elite almost certainly believe in the importance of national pride and independence and economic self-reliance as guiding national principles, for like citizens of most countries they have a strong patriotic streak and a relatively shallow understanding of international economics. This may be the extent of the cadres' belief in official ideology. The theory of the sociopolitical life probably is too obviously a

⁹ Reo M. Christenson, Alan S. Engel, Dan N. Jacobs, Mostafa Rejai and Herbert Waltzer, *Ideologies and Modern Politics* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1971), p. 16.

justification for demanding blind loyalty to the Kims. The idea of people as masters of society who completely subordinate themselves to the will of the party and the leader is patently self-contradictory. The cadres as well as the masses respected Kim Il-sung as a great leader even though they realized that much of his personality cult was manufactured. With a greatly reduced respect for Kim's son they are more likely to consider the excesses of his personality cult to be a sign of self-deluded grandeur.

Unlike the relatively isolated and uneducated masses, who can "enjoy the strange luxury of not having to think" (to quote a description of Soviet citizens under Stalin), the elite are faced with a cognitive dilemma.¹⁰ They may be aware of contradictions in *Juche* ideology and they have time to think about them. Yet they have less freedom to express doubts about ideology than do the masses because they are more closely watched by the authorities. They also have more reason to support the ideology that maintains their privileged existence. Some of the indoctrination may have gotten to them, especially in the form of constant political self-criticism sessions that must at least be made to sound genuine. They are also more involved than the masses in teaching and modeling the ideology. But they cannot escape the recognition that political and economic conditions in the DPRK do not square with the teachings of *Juche*.

The elite may live a double mental life, one public and the other private, like intellectuals in the former Soviet Union as described by David Remnick.¹¹ East Germans were portrayed by Schönsee & Lederer in the same way: privately cynical and corrupt but publicly accepting.¹² To tame contradictions the North Korean elite presumably rationalize their beliefs and behavior, as do people everywhere. In any case most of them have only fragmentary and second-hand knowledge of the workings of capitalism and liberal democracy, giving them little in the way of alternative ideologies to contemplate.

Finally, the cadres are preoccupied with day-to-day survival. They are haunted by the fear that they will lose their positions and endanger their families if they transgress Kim Jong-il's party line or do anything that might be interpreted as being disloyal to him.

¹⁰ Blair A. Ruble, "Muddling Through," in Erik P. Hoffmann and Robbin F. Laird, eds., *The Soviet Polity in the Modern Era* (New York, Aldine Publishing Company, 1984), pp. 903-914, quote from p. 912.

¹¹ David Remnick, *Lenin's Tomb: The Last Days of the Soviet Empire* (New York: Random House, 1993), especially p. 168: "'Gorbachev, me, all of us, we were double-thinkers, we had to balance truth and propaganda in our minds all the time,' said Shakhnazarov, an elfin intellectual who was at Gorbachev's side from start to finish."

¹² Reinhart Schönsee and Gerda Lederer, "The Gentle Revolution," *Political Psychology*, vol. 12, no. 2 (1991), pp. 309-330.

Official policy changes at Kim's whim: after the summit meeting he decreed that the years of North Korean press slander against the ROK must end, and it did so immediately.

b. Kim Jong-il

Does Kim Jong-il believe in the doctrine he inherited from his father, a doctrine he (the junior Kim) has been championing most of his life? Repeated calls in the Kim-controlled press for the elimination of self-interest in life and work reveal some recognition on his part of the basic motivational dilemma of socialism. Campaigns to eliminate bureaucratization likewise suggest that he understands the weaknesses of central planning and administration.

Kim's own words captured in the secret tape recordings of two South Korean film artists whom he had abducted to the North (and who later escaped) reveal his recognition of what he termed "flaws in socialism," although he acknowledges that he is the only man in Korea who could safely point out those flaws. Kim complains to his confidantes that "Our people do not want to accept new ideas." "Socialism is fine," he says, but "there are many internal problems that need to be solved." He laments that North Korean actors don't work as hard as South Korean actors because the North Koreans are guaranteed a living as long as they engage in minimal effort.¹³

Does Kim Jong-il believe, as he has been quoted so many times, that North Korea's problems can be solved with more ideological education? Quite possibly he does, given his strong interest in the fantasy world of film and his overweening confidence in his superior intelligence and ability to control others. But Kim may have overlooked that the very commitment to socialism that he expects in others is totally absent in his own Western-oriented luxurious lifestyle.

¹³ Cho, Kap-che, "Recorded Tape of Kim Chong-il's Live Voice—60 Minutes of Astonishing Confessions Similar to That of a Reactionary," *Wolgan Choson*, October 1995, pp. 104–128; translated by FBIS-EAS-95-213 (November 3, 1995) and entitled "Transcript of Kim Chong-il 'Secret' Tape Viewed," pp. 40–52. While residing in the United States, the film director Sang-ok Shin and his actress wife Eun-hi Choi authored a two-volume work (available only in an out-of-print Korean edition) about their experiences in North Korea: *Choguk-un chohanul chomolli* [Diary: The Motherland is Beyond the Sky and Far Away] (Pacific Palisades, CA: Pacific Artist Corporation, 1988). See also "Table Talk: Hwang Jang-yop and Shin Sang-ok Talk About the Two Homelands They Have Experienced," *Wolgan Choson*, March 1999, pp. 609–641.

As George Urban, a long-time student of Soviet ideology notes, there is a thin line between faith and self-delusion.¹⁴ Or rather one might say they are two sides of the same coin in that neither is firmly based in reality. Kim Jong-il is surrounded by sycophants who prevent him, at least some of the time, from seeing the world as it is. While it is possible that he is a pure Machiavellian, using the obviously self-serving *Juche* ideology to keep the people under his control, it is hard to conceive of someone who can consistently live such a lie. Human beings do indeed live many lies but they have a strong motivation to rationalize those lies. At the very least Kim Jong-il is likely to believe that the exaggerations of *Juche* ideology are a justifiable means to the utopian end of North Korean "national socialism." As Winston Churchill remarked (in the midst of war), "Truth is so precious that she should always be attended by a bodyguard of lies."¹⁵

Kim Jong-il is probably neither a calculating Machiavellian untouched by the truth nor a tortured soul trapped in a dysfunctional ideology of his own creation. He is doing the job of running North Korea as an independent state as best he knows how. His time and energy are mostly taken up with trying to cope with his country's myriad problems.

c. The Masses

The masses may find at least some of the basic tenets of *Juche* ideology plausible, for it is the only ideology they have been exposed to. This conclusion is supported by defector testimony. The average North Korean citizen believes socialism as an economic theory is superior to capitalism, and also believes that the capitalists are vigorously working to subvert socialism. Even after they have lived in South Korea for many years, defectors voice strong complaints about the capitalist system and the materialism of their new lives, as do citizens of the former Soviet Union.¹⁶ In North Korea, the spirit of socialism appears to have been modestly realized at the local level. Defectors say that North Korean people are more likely to help each other than Southerners. Yet even when the Kim government was keeping its faith with the people by providing regular rations, "social loafing" was rife in the workplace.

¹⁴ George R. Urban, *Radio Free Europe and the Pursuit of Democracy: My War within the Cold War* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 1997, p. 41.

¹⁵ Philo C. Wasburn, *Broadcasting Propaganda: International Radio Broadcasting and the Construction of Political Reality* (Westport, CN: Praeger, 1992), p. 74.

¹⁶ See for example Gail Warshofsky Lapidus, "Society under Strain," in Erik P. Hoffmann and Robbin F. Laird, eds., pp. 691-715.

Most North Koreans also seem to support the nationalistic and national self-reliant themes of *Juche*, characteristics of people in all countries. Specific applications of the party's *Juche* ideology to the workplace, such as in agriculture, are probably less appreciated. "*Juche*" as a label has been attached to any idea hatched by the Kims. *Juche* farming, for example, prescribes when and how crops are to be planted. *Juche* steel making dictates the steel-making process. In all cases the goal is to make local production units and the national economy self-sufficient. But these methods are promulgated by the party (or the Kims themselves, who claim to be experts on all matters), often without a thorough understanding of the technical aspects of a task. One example is intensive terrace farming which has denuded the hillsides and created serious erosion.

The more philosophical aspects of *Juche* later added by Kim Jong-il seem to be less accepted, perhaps not even understood, by the average North Korean. People as the masters of a society in which they have no voice makes little sense. Likewise, one wonders how many people actually believe that living for the "national family" under the fatherhood of Kim Jong-il is preferable to living for oneself and one's immediate family.

Defectors from North Korea agree that the vast majority of North Koreans harbored great love and respect for Kim Il-sung as the man who (so they thought) freed them from the Japanese, defeated the Americans in the Korean War, and built the foundations of the national economy. Many of the stories that make up the Kim Il-sung myth are believed. Except for the most ignorant and superstitious, most of the masses probably do not believe that Kim could actually control the weather or work miracles, but they may accept such statements as being worthy of him. They also believe he was recognized throughout the world as an outstanding man of his time.

The reclusive Kim Jong-il, on the other hand, is not popular. In Pyongyang, he is referred to in private as "that man" (*ku saram*) and "the fat tadpole" (*olchaengi baettaegi*).¹⁷ Despite intensive propaganda declaring the post-Kim Il-sung years to be an era of heroic achievements under his son, people have found life to be increasingly arduous. One wonders what conclusions the more superstitious segment of the population have drawn from the series of devastating natural disasters—floods, droughts, and tidal waves—that struck North Korea beginning in 1995, the year after the great

¹⁷ Descriptions from two 1997 interviews by Kongdan Oh in Seoul with a former high-ranking North Korean government official who defected in the early 1990s and with a former North Korean medical professional who defected in the mid-1990s.

leader's death. Kim Jong-il has preferred to present himself in the print media rather than on radio or television. He has never given a public speech to his people. The extensive coverage of his summit meeting with President Kim Dae-jung that riveted the South Korean public was not carried on North Korean television.

Yet even in hard times the masses continue to accept or at least tolerate socialism and *Juche* and the rule of the leaders who, in fact, brought them to ruin. This acceptance can be accounted for first by the fact that the North Koreans have never experienced political or social freedom. During the 700-year Choson dynasty preceding Japanese rule, most poor Koreans worked for landlords. During the Japanese colonial period, they worked for the Japanese. After the war, they worked on party-run collectives. To the North Korean people, life in a regimented non-democratic society has become strongly ingrained. And this life is backed by centuries of Confucianism that teaches that ordinary people have their proper station in life and should subject themselves to the will of their superiors.

The masses in North Korea differ from those in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe who turned their backs on their governments in one important respect—they are cut off from outside information. They have been told that “certain countries” have abandoned socialism and are now suffering economic chaos, but they have no access to first-hand information to judge foreign conditions. They have even less information about life and thought in non-communist countries such as South Korea, Japan, and the United States. If the North Korean people don't believe what they are told, they have nothing else to believe.

Defectors say that even though they embraced some aspects of *Juche* ideology while actively disbelieving others (such as the Kim Jong-il cult), they had no energy to pursue political thought and no opportunity for discussion. So they abandoned political thought altogether and resigned themselves to repeating party slogans. For many North Koreans it is not a case of fearing to voice doubts or publicly question policies, but rather a case of not even raising questions in one's mind. Similar responses to totalitarian communist regimes have been reported in the former communist countries of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Eric Scheye quotes a Czech citizen on the psychological mood under communism: “People did not hear or listen to what went on outside themselves. Everyone was in their own small world.”¹⁸ As one defector from North

¹⁸ Eric Scheye, “Psychological Notes on Central Europe: 1989 and Beyond,” *Political Psychology*, vol. 12, no. 2 (1991), pp. 331–344.

Korea said, "If a normal desire to learn the truth survived in their [North Koreans'] minds, the distortion of history could not have continued this long."¹⁹ Yet alongside this lack of political belief and interest is a strong emotional attachment to things Korean. This same defector recalls being moved to tears by a North Korean drama film heavily laden with propaganda. Yet when he saw the movie again after fleeing to South Korea, the drama struck him as absolutely silly.

4. Conclusion

Kim Jong-il has little to learn from foreign communications. His knowledge is extensive even though his experience is limited. His beliefs rationalize and support his life and his work. Those cadres with access to foreign information are in a similar situation. Many are presumably convinced that they must support the Kim regime to preserve their lives and livelihood. Others may wish to defect but lack the opportunity. The masses remain largely ignorant of the reality of life outside their country. They are a fertile field for communication. As they learn more, some may prefer the relatively simple, if impoverished socialist life. Many others will seek a change.

F. COMMUNICATION: THE TRADITIONAL MODEL

If communications targeted at North Korea are to be effective, communication principles of demonstrated effectiveness should be employed in crafting them. The communication model of persuasion has its roots in antiquity, going back as far as Aristotle's discussion of source (*ethos*), message (*logos*), audience sentiments (*pathos*), and context (*atechnoi*).²⁰ The model was given a scientific basis in work during the 1930s and 1940s by Paul Lazarsfeld, who studied how variations in communications affected changes in audience attitudes.²¹ During World War II, this line of research was expanded by behavioral scientists in the Information and Educational Division of the War Department. A number of these researchers, most prominently Carl Hovland, returned to Yale after the war and pursued a systematic inquiry into the components of the communication model, which had been defined by Lasswell as "who says what to whom

¹⁹ From a 1997 interview by Kongdan Oh in Seoul with a former North Korean university student in his thirties who defected while studying abroad in the early 1990s.

²⁰ Anthony R. Pratkanis and Elliot Aronson, *Age of Propaganda: The Everyday Use and Abuse of Persuasion* (New York: W. H. Freeman and Company, 1992), pp. 18-19.

²¹ See Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion*, third edition (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1999), p. 168.

in what channel with what effects.”²² These components were labeled “source,” “message,” “medium” (or “channel”), and “audience,” with feedback from audience to source providing a means of determining effect. Like Lazarsfeld’s work, the Yale approach was empirical and piecemeal.²³

The Yale model depicts the audience as relatively passive although possessed of traits such as intelligence that can interact with the other components of the model to enhance or limit persuasion. Persuasion is seen as a multi-step process that moves the audience through a series of stages from attention to message comprehension to message acceptance to message retention and finally to action.²⁴ At each stage different factors in the model influence persuasive effect. For example, the impact provided by a source, message and medium gain audience attention; clarity of message and capacity of medium influence comprehension; source credibility promotes acceptance.

1. Source

Results of hundreds of studies have highlighted two significant source factors: credibility and attractiveness. All else equal, credible and attractive sources are the most persuasive.

Perceived credibility consists of trustworthiness and expertness: a trustworthy source will speak truthfully; a knowledgeable source will speak accurately. Aristotle famously identified the role of trustworthiness in persuasion: “We believe good men more fully and more readily than others; this is true generally whatever the question is, and absolutely true where exact certainty is impossible and opinions are divided.”²⁵ A trustworthy and knowledgeable source can speak the truth. A trustworthy but unknowledgeable source may be unintentionally biased. A knowledgeable but untrustworthy source may intentionally mislead.

Indicators of trustworthiness include personal character, reputation for trust, confidence and consistency in speaking and behavior, and demonstrated lack of self-interest in the persuasive endeavor. Indicators of expertness include experience,

²² Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell, p. 172.

²³ The most comprehensive statement of research from the Yale school is Carl I. Hovland, Irving L. Janis, and Harold H. Kelley, *Communication and Persuasion* (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1953).

²⁴ See Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell's description of the work of Hovland and William McGuire, pp. 178 and 190.

²⁵ Anthony R. Pratkanis and Elliot Aronson, p. 86.

credentials and titles, public recognition, sometimes age, and volubility (people who say more are perceived to know more).

The importance of source characteristics on persuasion can hardly be overestimated: countless examples of charlatans who have misled their followers attest to this assertion, as does much of marketing. One moderator of the credibility effect is the “sleeper effect” or “dissociation effect.” Over time, a message may become dissociated from the source. Messages from low-credible sources thus become more believable while messages from high-credible sources become less believable.

A source can enhance its trustworthiness in two ways: by appearing to speak against self-interest, and by appearing to address a third party rather than the target audience, while still being “overheard” by the target audience.

Whereas credibility and expertness are “rational” contributors to a source’s persuasive power, attractiveness is a largely emotional contributor but nonetheless important. Attitude change studies have highlighted three components of source attractiveness: physical attractiveness, likeability, and perceived similarity to the audience. The fact that physically attractive sources are more persuasive can be explained by the finding in personal attraction studies that “what is beautiful is (assumed to be) good.”²⁶ Physical attractiveness also increases the impact of a source and draws audience attention. Likeability keeps the audience close to the source, and by creating an emotional bond between source and audience, may put additional pressure on the audience to accept the source’s communications (it is awkward to disagree with someone you like).

Perceived similarity, defined in terms of shared attitudes and values, similar background, and even similar appearance or character, has a logical link to persuasiveness. To the extent that truth is situational, being more true or relevant for some than for others, a source that shares experiences with the audience is more likely to be seen as communicating the same truth as the audience experiences. Similar persons are also more liked than dissimilar, and this liking can in turn enhance persuasive impact.

North Koreans have been told they should reject news and opinion emanating from foreign sources as they would reject a poison. Information from South Korea (viewed as a U.S. colonial state) and from the West is characterized in the North Korean

²⁶ K. K. Dion, Ellen Berscheid, and Elaine Hatfield, “What is Beautiful is Good,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 24 (1972), pp. 285–290.

press as the “yellow wind of imperialism,” a wind designed to weaken the North Korean people. An article in the party newspaper *Nodong Sinmun* entitled “The Imperialists Wily Strategy of Disintegration” explains: “The main object of this strategy is the mind of people. In other words, imperialists are seeking to get the normally sound mind of people in revolutionary and progressive countries to degenerate.”²⁷ Defectors relate how surprised they were to learn that the Korean War was actually launched by North Korea. One defector, who first learned this fact from a Russian publication he ran across in the Russian embassy in Beijing, said he would not have believed it if he hadn’t seen it in a Russian source.²⁸

News and opinion from American sources is likely to be distrusted by many North Koreans. This skepticism could be countered by disguising the source (as in gray or black propaganda) or ostensibly directing the communications to another audience, for example the Chinese, thereby creating an “overheard” situation. Some measure of credibility may be recovered by demonstrating expertness, as in describing conditions in North Korea more accurately than does the North Korean press. During World War II, the German propaganda radio announcer “Lord Haw Haw” demonstrated an incredibly detailed knowledge of local events in Britain (obviously based on German spying), thus attracting considerable attention from British listeners.²⁹ Communications delivered by North Koreans who have had the opportunity to travel outside the country’s borders should be especially credible. They become “experts” while maintaining some of their trustworthiness as fellow North Koreans. Information from foreign visitors to North Korea is likely to be more suspect. The attractiveness variables should play their usual role: the more physically attractive, likable, and similar a source is to the North Koreans, the more believable.

²⁷ Song-kuk Ch’oe, “Imperialists’ Wily Strategy of Disintegration,” *Nodong Sinmun*, May 3, 1998, p. 6.

²⁸ A young North Korean medical professional who fled to China in the middle 1990s and was interviewed by Kongdan Oh in Seoul in 1997 said, “I was going through a magazine [while visiting the ROK embassy in Beijing]. One journal was familiar to me: *Red Army* [a Russian military journal]. The journal carried an article about President Yeltsin’s recent visit to South Korea and his delivering some archival material on the Korean War. I read the article and found out that the war was triggered by Kim Il-sung. I did not believe it and asked a man at the embassy. He laughed and told me what he knew. If the journal had not been from Russia, I still would have believed the article was fabricated by South Korea. . . I had not believed in *Juche*, but I did believe in Kim Il-sung. . . So I decided to go to South Korea to learn more.”

²⁹ Michael Nelson, *War of the Black Heavens: The Battles of Western Broadcasting in the Cold War* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997), p. 8.

Research on receptivity of communist audiences to Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Liberty, and the BBC has revealed that their credibility was very high, especially compared with communist radio, with the BBC having higher credibility than the American stations. But the European communists were arguably less isolated and indoctrinated than the North Koreans. One source problem that was revealed in Europe during the cold war was the sometimes poor credibility of defectors, who made up a large proportion of the international radio broadcast staff. Some communist listeners saw them as dissimilar in terms of being traitors or escapists. Radio broadcasters from South Korea could play up the similarity of Koreans everywhere if they could convince the North Korean audience that they were not acting as surrogates for the United States. This might be done by taking an independent line and sometimes criticizing the Americans, thus arguing against the self-interest of the so-called imperialists.

An interesting question is what language to use for radio communications. Voice of America uses English and local languages but clearly identifies itself as a voice of the United States. The Korean service of Radio Free Asia broadcasts in Korean but eschews use of the North Korean dialect on the theory that it is too closely identified with the propagandistic communications of the North Korean government. Although some of the vocabulary is different, the two Korean dialects are comprehensible to all Koreans. Few North Koreans speak English, limiting its usefulness as a medium. Some speak Japanese, but Japan is widely hated. A few North Koreans speak Russian or Chinese, making these languages a possible medium, as in an “overheard” communication.

2. Channel

Considerations in choosing channels of communication into North Korea include accessibility, impact, capacity, cost, and resistance to interference. The channel choices are personal contact, written materials, telephone, internet, radio, and television.

Personal contact has the greatest impact and the greatest potential to communicate complex information, but it is relatively easy to restrict. Personal contact between North Koreans and outsiders is strictly controlled. Incoming visitors are given a security escort during their stay and are usually restricted to their hotel or living quarters except for business. Only a few high-ranking North Korean citizens are permitted to leave the country, and they too are accompanied by security personnel. The only relatively free flow of cross-border traffic is along the northern border into China. A small bribe of the North Korean security guards can get Koreans into China, but even there they can be tracked by North Korean security personnel who cooperate with Chinese police to

repatriate defectors. Estimates of the number of North Koreans taking refuge in the border areas of China range from 150,000 to 250,000.³⁰

Chinese traders can also cross legally into North Korea on business or gain entrance by offering bribes. Practically the only Westerners who are permitted into the country are aid workers, few of whom speak Korean, and they too are given a security escort. In recent years a growing number of South Koreans have been allowed into North Korea on business, but they are in contact only with the elite class of Koreans. In the first 16 months after the inauguration of South Korean tourism to the remote Mount Kumgang area in North Korea, over 200,000 South Koreans made the visit, but North Korean security guards were posted along the tourist route to prevent North and South Koreans from speaking to each other.³¹ North Koreans have almost no access to the internet or to international telephone lines. They do have access to government television stations. Television has strong impact, according to the well-documented principle that "seeing is believing." But ground-based TV transmitters have limited range and satellite systems require receiving dishes that North Koreans are not permitted to own.

Broadcasts from Radio Free Asia, Voice of America, and the ROK's Far Eastern Broadcasting (*Kukdong Pangsong*) are targeted at North Korea. Radio, especially short-wave radio, reaches far and wide. Radio jamming is expensive and not completely effective. At the height of the cold war in the late 1950s the Soviet Union devoted more electricity to jamming Western radio than to powering its own domestic radio, and more than the Western radios were using to broadcast into the Soviet Union, but even this level of jamming was effective only in major metropolitan areas.³² Written materials such as newspapers and periodicals are difficult to get into North Korea. Leaflets can be dropped from balloons by the ROK when the winds are favorable, but they have limited impact and the act of dropping them is belligerent. Information accompanying aid packages can reach a limited number of aid recipients, but the DPRK government places conditions on how aid can be labeled and distributed.

³⁰ W. Courtland Robinson, Myung Ken Lee, Kenneth Hill, and Gilbert M. Burnham, "Mortality in North Korean Migrant Households: A Retrospective Study," *The Lancet*, Vol. 354, issue 9175 (July 24, 1999), pp. 291-295.

³¹ "Number of Tourists to DPRK's Mt. Kumgang Exceeds 200,000," *Korea Herald* (Internet version), March 22, 2000.

³² Michael Nelson, p. 96.

3. Message

One of the first questions to be asked about message content is what balance should be given between news, opinion, and cultural teaching, recognizing that news itself is colored by intentions and opinions. As constructivists are fond of pointing out, news is not what happens, but what a source chooses to say happens.³³

Communication research has investigated a number of important message factors. In a persuasive communication should one or both sides of an argument be presented for maximum persuasive impact? The general finding is that if the audience is interested in the topic and likely to find out about counterinformation, both sides should be presented in order to lend credibility to the source. This consideration brings up the issue of “inoculation,” whereby a source presents a weak counterargument and then strongly refutes it in order to inoculate the audience against subsequent contact with a stronger version of the counterargument. The North Korean press regularly practices inoculation to prepare its people to resist the attractions of democracy and the market economy by pointing out how deceptively attractive capitalism is.

Another much-researched issue is how much emphasis should be placed on rational versus emotional argument. For all but the most thoughtful audiences, emotional presentations prove to be more persuasive than rational ones.

Last but certainly not least, one of the tenets of good propaganda is that it should take the offensive. Refutations of the other side's charges are frequently ineffective. To the extent that communications directed at North Korea are meant to achieve a persuasive goal, a few strong themes should be communicated repeatedly, with coordination among different sources and channels.

4. Audience

International broadcasters such as VOA attempt to estimate audience size and gather feedback in various ways. The simplest approach is to read mail from listeners, but since few North Koreans have access to international mail this approach is limited. A second feedback source is defector interviews, although the number of defectors is relatively small compared with the North Korean population, and defectors are likely to present a biased sample of opinion. A third source of feedback is visitors—those who go into the country and those who come out. A very small number of foreigners have taken

³³ Philo C. Wasburn, p. xix.

short wave radios into North Korea to test reception to international broadcasts, and a few North Koreans traveling abroad have been asked about radio reception in their country. Another way to gain feedback is to monitor the North Korean media for reaction to international radio: strong complaints or vigorous efforts at forewarning or inoculation suggest that international radio signals are getting through and that a substantial number of people are listening. Evidence of such objections on the part of North Korea are presented below.

Feedback on the content of radio broadcasts (or any form of communication for that matter) can also be obtained from evaluation panels of judges who have special expertise in North Korea, including defectors. Their responses cannot provide an indication of how many North Koreans are exposed to communications, but they can suggest how those exposed are likely to respond. For example, one defector asserts that an accurate description of the daily life of a middle class South Korean would be rejected out of hand by most North Koreans because they could not believe such a lifestyle is possible.³⁴

To maximize comprehension and acceptance, messages should be tailored to specific audience segments, rather than "broadcast" to a mass audience. With personal contact this is possible, but with a limited number of electronic media channels (compared with the many radio and television stations available in an American metropolitan area), this is impractical but not impossible. Even with the use of only one channel, it is possible to tailor one program to one segment and another program to a different segment.

Marketers decide what segments to target by considering at least four factors. First, how easy is it to define and identify a particular segment? Second, how easy is it to reach that segment? Third, how important is that segment in terms of size or reaction potential for the marketer (source)? Fourth, how cost-effective is it to target that segment, considering its reachability, size, and importance?

³⁴ From a 1997 interview by Kongdan Oh in Seoul with a young professional who defected from the DPRK in 1963 when he was a college student. He commented on the credibility of the following story about a hypothetical South Korean family: "On the weekend we drove our car to a resort town on the beach for the weekend. We stayed at a hotel and went fishing and played on the beach. On the way home, we encountered heavy traffic." The defector said that the North Korean response would be, "As our great leader taught, people in South Korea are pure liars." He suggested that a more credible yet enticing message would be a description of what the average South Korean family has in its refrigerator.

The North Korean audience could be segmented in several ways. North Koreans in country could be targeted separately from North Koreans in China or Russia. The North Korean elite could be targeted separately from the masses, or the young from the old. Each of these segments can be best reached by different kinds of communications and is likely to respond to communications in different ways. In terms of action responses, an interesting question is whether opinions should be directed to the North Korean elites, who have more power but also more reason to protect the status quo, or the masses, who have little recognition of their latent power but more reason to seek change.

Audience research in the context of the communication model has focused on several audience factors that influence persuasive impact. One is audience intelligence. Audiences with moderate intelligence seem to be the most easily persuaded since they are smart enough to comprehend the message but not smart enough or educated enough to formulate effective counterarguments. Those with moderate self-esteem are likewise the most easily persuaded, since people with high self-esteem can afford to change their opinions in response to a communication but are unlikely to do so because they are confident of the correctness of their own opinions whereas people with low self-esteem may be threatened by new ideas.

Another important consideration is the audience's current knowledge and attitudes, which are used to filter and interpret incoming information. North Koreans, who have little knowledge of Western material culture, will have difficulty understanding many "market basket" comparisons between capitalist and socialist economies. And since they have been taught that Westerners are scheming to undermine socialism, they will automatically be skeptical of Western communications, however plausible or sensible they may otherwise be.

In general terms, the interplay between audience knowledge and attitudes and the degree to which a communication will be comprehended and accepted is a matter of latitude of acceptance and rejection. Beginning with the work of Hovland, it has generally been found that most persuasion is achieved with communications that are neither too different nor too similar to the audience's current attitudes and experience.³⁵ Too similar and the new information is assimilated into the current data base with little thought and little impact, falling well within the latitude of acceptance. Too different and

³⁵ For example, C. Hovland, O. J. Harvey, and M. Sherif, "Assimilation and Contrast Effects in Reaction to Communication and Attitude Change," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, vol. 55 (1957), pp. 244-252.

the new information is rejected as incomprehensible or implausible, falling in the latitude of rejection. Obviously, the width of these latitudes varies for each individual and each audience segment. Having been for so long isolated and subjected to hostile anti-capitalist rhetoric, the North Korean people have probably developed a very narrow latitude of acceptance and wide attitude of rejection of Western communications.

5. International Radio Broadcasting

An effective channel for broadly communicating information into another country is international radio, especially shortwave radio, which has greater reach than longer-wave transmissions on the AM or FM band. One defector from North Korea has said, "If someone asked me to do something for reunification, giving me enough resources, I would ship more than 10 million small radios to the North in the first place."³⁶ This tactic was used by U.S. propaganda warriors in Vietnam, and used much less extensively by the ROK government's information campaign against the DPRK. The most important radio broadcasts to North Korea are from the Voice of America (VOA), Radio Free Asia (RFA), and the ROK's Far Eastern Broadcasting, along with ROK domestic radio stations that can be received in the North. Korean is not one of the 43 languages broadcast by the BBC. Over the years several Christian shortwave stations have also broadcast to North Korea, including Adventist World Radio-Asia, Adventist Radio-Russia, Trans-World Radio-Guam, and World Harvest Radio (out of Hawaii).³⁷

a. Voice of America

Voice of America was established as a U.S. government agency in 1942, 7 months after the bombing of Pearl Harbor.³⁸ According to its charter, VOA "will present the policies of the United States clearly and effectively, and will also present responsible discussions and opinion on these policies." VOA "presents a balanced and comprehensive projection of significant American thought and institutions." VOA broadcasts in English and 52 languages, including Korean. In addition to shortwave broadcasts, VOA programs are transmitted by AM and FM radio and by television from 1,200 affiliated stations. VOA also maintains a Web site. VOA became part of the U.S. Information Agency in 1953, which was merged with the U.S. State Department in

³⁶ Memoir of a former DPRK air force senior lieutenant, *Wolgan Choson*, August 1999, pp. 62-96.

³⁷ Based on information from an interview without attribution at VOA headquarters on July 21, 2000.

³⁸ Information on VOA was obtained from the VOA Web site www.voa.gov and from an interview without attribution at VOA headquarters on July 21, 2000.

1999. VOA and RFA (as well as WORLDNET Television and Radio and TV Marti) operate under the authority of the Broadcasting Board of Governors, an independent U.S. government entity.

As of August 2000, VOA was broadcasting daily to East Asia in Burmese, Cantonese, Indonesian, Khmer, Korean, Laotian, Mandarin, Thai, Tibetan, and Vietnamese. VOA Korean programs are aired from 6:30–7:00 a.m. Korean time on three shortwave frequencies, and from 10:00–11:00 p.m. Korean time on four shortwave frequencies and one medium-wave (AM) frequency. All programs originate in Washington, DC. Shortwave transmissions are broadcast from the Philippines and Thailand, and medium-wave transmissions from a transmitter in Russia. The North Koreans refer to VOA as *Sori Bangsong* [Radio Voice].

The contents of a typical broadcast hour (May 8, 2000) include:

- World news (11 minutes)
- Economic news (3 minutes)
- Focus on Asia (6 minutes)
- Correspondents' reports (8 minutes)
- In-depth reports (6 minutes)
- English lesson (6 minutes)
- *Today's Asia/Computer World/Global Village/Economic Forecast/Koreans in the News/Music World* (alternating, 6 minutes)
- Editorial (3 minutes)
- U.S. headlines (6 minutes)
- News summary (5 minutes)

b. Radio Free Asia

Radio Free Asia, like Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty (beamed at the former Soviet Union), is intended to function as a surrogate radio station, broadcasting information that domestic Asian stations are unwilling to air.³⁹ The idea for RFA arose after the Tiananmen demonstrations in 1989. Senator Joseph Biden, a strong supporter of RFE/RL, was the major political force behind the creation of RFA. On March 11, 1996, the Asia Pacific Network (APN) was incorporated as a private corporation to broadcast in native languages to China (in Mandarin, Cantonese, and Tibetan), Burma, Cambodia, Laos, North Korea and Vietnam. According to its director, Richard Richter, the APN name was chosen to be "less confrontational than the Radio Free Asia name implies." Mr. Richter continued, "We will not go out of our way to deliberately provoke these countries, nor engage in 'stick in the eye journalism.'"⁴⁰ Opponents of this soft line in broadcasting, principally Senator Jesse Helms, withheld funding until the name was changed to Radio Free Asia.⁴¹

The International Broadcasting Act of 1994, under which RFA was created, charges the radio with the mission to "provide accurate and timely information, news and commentary about events in the respective countries of Asia and elsewhere, and to be a forum for a variety of opinions and voices within Asian nations whose people do not fully enjoy freedom of expression."⁴² Although RFA is a private corporation, its funding is provided by the U.S. Congress, and like VOA, RFA operates under the authority of the Broadcasting Board of Governors. RFA employs 230 people full time (as of August 2000). All programming originates from the Washington office, with transmitters in 12 locations in Asia and Europe. RFA maintains a Web site in English and its broadcast languages.

As of August 2000, RFA was broadcasting daily in shortwave to East Asia for 12 hours in Mandarin; 3 hours in Cantonese; 6 hours in Tibetan; 2 hours each in Korean, Burmese, Laotian, and Khmer; and 1 hour in Uighur. RFA's Korean service, which

³⁹ Background information on RFA was obtained from its Web site www.rfa.org. Interviews were conducted with several members of the RFA staff in their Washington, DC, office on July 18 and August 1, 2000.

⁴⁰ Nancy Lynch Street, "From Radio Free Asia to the Asia Pacific Network . . . and Back Again," in Nancy Lynch Street and Marilyn J. Matelski, eds., *Messages from the Underground: Transnational Radio in Resistance and in Solidarity* (Westport, CN: Praeger, 1997, pp. 157-174. quotations from p. 169.

⁴¹ Nancy Lynch Street, p. 173.

⁴² FAQ page from www.rfa.org

began broadcasting on March 3, 1997, has 15 full-time employees and part-time correspondents in Tokyo, Bangkok, Frankfurt, Seoul, New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles. Korean broadcasts are aired from 7:00–8:00 a.m. Korean time over three frequencies and 11:00–12:00 p.m. over four frequencies. Unlike VOA, RFA repeats much of its programming in the morning and nighttime broadcasts. Many of RFA's news stories, commentaries, and feature pieces are available on its Web site in their native languages. A typical hour's broadcast would include the following segments:

- News (6 minutes)
- Commentary (3 minutes)
- Features (10 minutes)
- Book reading (duration unknown)
- Interviews (duration unknown)
- This day in history (duration unknown)
- Language lesson (duration unknown)

c. ROK Radio

Some AM broadcasts from the ROK can be received (when not jammed) in the DPRK. The ROK government-funded but “independently operated” station tasked with broadcasting to North Korea is Far Eastern Broadcasting (*Kuktong Pangsong*). No further information on this station has been obtained by the author.⁴³

d. Audience Reaction

To gain audience feedback VOA and RFA rely on interviews with South Koreans (who have free access to radio broadcasts), North Korean refugees and defectors who have crossed over into China, visitors such as international aid workers going into North Korea, and Koreans living in Japan. Both broadcasters devote the bulk of their audience research to their Chinese audiences. Feedback from North Korea is sparse and largely

⁴³ According to a member of the ROK delegation at its embassy in Washington, DC, under the Kim Dae-jung administration's engagement policy the government is reluctant to discuss any initiatives toward the DPRK that might upset delicate inter-Korean negotiations. In fact, most such operations, such as wired broadcasts across the Demilitarized Zone and balloon drops of radios, have apparently been discontinued since June 2000.

anecdotal owing to the closed nature of North Korean society and the organizations' lower priority for North Korean research.

Signal jamming can be monitored from the transmitter locations, but assessing the effectiveness of jamming from other points within North Korea is problematic. A few travelers to North Korea have carried short wave radios and subsequently reported back on clarity of reception. When VOA began sending medium-wave broadcasts to North Korea from a Russian transmitter in 1993, North Korea began jamming all VOA broadcasts. Since then reception has apparently been spotty but not completely jammed, since jamming requires large amounts of electricity, which is in short supply in North Korea. The number of radios with unfixed dials (including shortwave radios) in the hands of North Koreans is difficult to estimate, although the number is apparently very small. Security personnel make unannounced visits to check on unauthorized radio listening. One VOA staffer surmised that since most listening must be done surreptitiously, alone or in the company of a few trusted people, often with earphones, listeners probably have little opportunity to concentrate on the content of broadcasts.

An indirect indication of the effectiveness of international radio may be gained by the reaction of the targeted government, although in the case of North Korea, which complains about practically anything the United States does, it becomes difficult to separate real alarm from routine propaganda.

Although the DPRK press occasionally complains about VOA, it is as likely to cite VOA as a news source, particularly when it is good news about North Korea. Pyongyang's reaction to RFA is altogether harsher. In the days following the inauguration of RFA's Korean service in March 1997, both the international and domestic Korean media delivered bitter denunciations. KCBN, the domestic radio network, protested:

As has been reported, the United States recently started the Korean-language broadcast Radio Free Asia which is targeted at our country. . . The Korean-language Radio Free Asia is an expression of the unchanged U.S. policy to maintain hostility and crush the DPRK. Through the Korean-language broadcast, the United States pursues the goal of spreading American values and corrupt ideas and culture among us, of paralyzing our people's independent

ideology and consciousness, and of corroding and disintegrating our socialist position.⁴⁴

On May 31, 1999, RFA was singled out in the authoritative joint editorial "Let Us Reject the Imperialists' Ideological and Cultural Infiltration" published in *Nodong Sinmun*, the party newspaper, and *Kulloja*, the monthly theoretical journal of the party's central committee. The editorial voices a note of concern:

Through Radio Free Asia they [the imperialists] enhance their slandering and denigration of us, and employ all sorts of artifice and maneuvers after establishing reactionary ideological and cultural strongholds along the nation's border. . . . As long as imperialism remains and class struggle continues, there is no absolute guarantee that the socialist ideological and cultural front will be held fast to of itself.⁴⁵

As usual, a flurry of follow-on articles and broadcasts elaborated on the party's message. A week later *Nodong Sinmun* condemned RFA in the context of the demise of communism in Europe, reflecting the dilemma of opening to the outside world without being changed by it:

In the past, imperialists' broadcast propaganda played a major role in the pursuit of anti-socialist strategy. Especially, the Voice of America, Radio Free Europe, and Radio Liberty played a big role in triggering the collapse of the former Soviet Union and the Eastern European nations. . . . Putting up the revolutionary mosquito net firmly does not mean being closed to the outside. We should do ideological indoctrination work well and at the same time shut off all the possible routes of infiltration; with regard to any non-socialist elements, we should nip them in the bud resolutely.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Unattributed talk entitled "The Propaganda Trumpet Will Never Work," Korean Central Broadcasting Network (KCBN), March 17, 1997.

⁴⁵ "Let Us Reject the Imperialists' Ideological and Cultural Infiltration," joint editorial in *Nodong Sinmun* and *Kulloja*, broadcast on KCBN on May 31, 1999.

⁴⁶ Ch'oe, Hak-ch'ol, "The Wily Schemes of Ideological, Cultural Infiltration," *Nodong Sinmun*, June 8, 1999, p. 6.

G. PERSUASION: THE COGNITIVE RESPONSE VIEW

The traditional communication model views the audience as people who passively yet consciously confront a communication, try to understand it, weigh the facts and arguments before accepting or rejecting them, and then use their newly received information to guide behavior. But a moment's reflection on the circumstances of everyday communication suggests that on the one hand people usually don't attend closely to communications, and on the other hand they sometimes actively seek out and "argue" with information.

The cognitive response view of communication embraces multiple hypotheses about how people seek and use information in their daily lives. These hypotheses extend the view of communication in two ways. First, they explain what happens in an "over-communicated" society in which most communications (news stories, advertisements, commercials) are largely ignored.⁴⁷ But despite being ignored, this information appears to exert a cumulative effect on people as they process the information using cognitive shortcuts to save time and energy. Another aspect of the communication process illuminated by the cognitive response model is how non-rational mechanisms of communication influence attitude formation.

The North Korean people, cut off from the life and thought of foreign societies, are hardly likely to ignore whatever foreign communications may penetrate their country's borders. But how credible the information is will depend in part on how credible the ubiquitous North Korean information is. If they have come to disbelieve or ignore domestic radio, they may adopt a negative attitude toward all radio. North Koreans are inundated by propaganda designed to secure loyalty and boost morale, but they receive very little hard news. Communications come from the government AM and FM radio stations (radio dials are fixed to government frequencies), the government television station, wired speakers in homes and buildings (the "third broadcasting network"), public posters, required political study sessions, and years of political studies in school. All this information is controlled by the government. Defectors say that this propaganda is ignored as much as possible, but it seems likely that the cumulative effect of this incessant propaganda is substantial.

⁴⁷ Al Ries and Jack Trout, *Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1981), pp. 6-7.

One of the robust findings of cognitive psychology is that the mind (brain) is not a blank slate; rather, it is a sense-making machine shaped by previously received communications and designed to process information quickly and efficiently, but not altogether accurately. While the information that fills the mind depends on what the individual is exposed to, the principles by which information is received and processed are common to everyone. An understanding of many of the principles is provided by three cognitive theories.

1. Three Theories

Attribution theory outlines how people look for the causes of events, for example, why crops fail or the economy lags or even why a particular message has been directed at a particular audience. Most observations do not trigger a search for explanations, but unusual or unexpected observations do. One basic attributional principle is correspondence: when events occur together, they are assumed to be related in a causal fashion. For example, the downturn of the North Korean economy in the 1980s corresponded to the period when Kim Jong-il was beginning to be mentioned in the press, so Kim may well be blamed for the economic downturn. A second principle is the fundamental attribution bias: the tendency to locate causes in people rather than situations. Leaders are usually praised or blamed for the fortunes and misfortunes of their countries, regardless of personal responsibility.

A pair of companion principles help people assign responsibility to actors. First, when an action occurs despite the odds, it appears to be more intentional than it would otherwise be; i.e., its causal attribution is *augmented* by countervailing circumstances. When an action occurs in a favorable situation, its personal causes tend to be *discounted* by situational events. To take an example, if Kim Jong-il oversees an improved economy despite a continuing foreign economic boycott, his perceived success will be enhanced. If he fails under the same circumstances, his failure will be excused; i.e., his responsibility will be discounted.

The theory of cognitive dissonance provides an explanation of how people resolve discrepancies between conflicting information. The theory's first principle is that recognized discrepancies or dissonances between thoughts are uncomfortable, and their recognition motivates cognitive work to reduce dissonance. For example, the teaching that socialism is the most superior economic model is inconsistent with North Korea's abject poverty; this dissonance should make people think.

Research has revealed several ways by which dissonance is reduced. One way is to avoid thinking about the inconsistency. Many North Koreans are perhaps so accustomed to socialist propaganda on the one hand and poverty on the other that they do not notice the inconsistency. Another dissonance reduction method is to seek information that would bolster one of the beliefs, or to seek a higher principle that would explain the inconsistency. The belief in the correctness of socialism could be bolstered by the teaching that socialism can succeed only if everyone wholeheartedly supports it. A higher resolving principle taught by the government is that socialism in its early stages encounters many obstacles but will eventually prevail. A typical situation in which thoughts are dissonant is when there is a conflict between a belief and an experience, with the finding that experiences are difficult to ignore or reinterpret, forcing a change in beliefs. Continued poverty, which is difficult to deny, may force a reevaluation of socialist theory.

A third theory underlying many of the principles of cognitive psychology is balance theory, which is like cognitive consistency theory (in fact, it is a broader form of that theory) in that it posits that people try to keep a balance among their emotional orientation (attitudes). The well-known adage that "the friend of my enemy is my enemy" is an example of a balance between liking and the recognition of an established relationship. In North Korea's case, if a citizen believes government propaganda, then the United States, which by their government's definition is evil, can only lie and perform evil deeds. Any seemingly plausible truth or benevolent deed must have ulterior motives; otherwise the picture is unbalanced. To quote the North Korean press, "Aggression and plunder as the true colors of the imperialists cannot be changed by any means. The only change, if any, would be that they become increasingly shrewd and sinister in their methods."⁴⁸

2. Persuasion Techniques

A popular and inclusive list of persuasion techniques supported by cognitive principles has been presented by Robert Cialdini, who interviewed and worked with "persuasion professionals" (mostly salespersons) whose living depended on their success

⁴⁸ Han, Myong-hwan, "The Imperialists' Ideological, Cultural Infiltration Must Not Be Tolerated," *Minju Choson*, August 10, 2000, p. 4.

at persuasion.⁴⁹ These principles can be employed to persuade the North Korean people that they have been lied to and misled by their leaders. The principles are likewise embodied in North Korean communications directed at their citizens and foreign audiences to support those same lies.

The technique of friendship or liking rests on balance theory: liked communicators are more persuasive. This liking principle has also been demonstrated in the traditional communication model research; the cognitive research explains how liking influences persuasion. Liking but not believing someone creates an imbalance. Either the sentiment toward the source or toward the communication needs to be changed. If the source is present and vivid, it is hard to deny. Thus charismatic leaders can get their followers to believe highly improbable things.

The technique of reciprocity has roots both in cultural norms and in the friendship technique and balance principle. When a person, especially a likable person, does one a favor, one generally feels obligated to reciprocate. The size of the favor is a secondary consideration. North Koreans have been taught that Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il have devoted their lives to the people; in return, the people are expected to be absolutely grateful (and obedient) to their leader. If foreigners extend aid to North Koreans, North Koreans are obligated to return the favor.

The display of authority and/or expertise is another persuasive technique. According to attribution principles, people tend to focus on the human agents of events. If someone speaks with authority or expertise, he tends to be believed, even if the speech does not originate with him, and often even if it contradicts current beliefs (although this will also prompt dissonance reduction activity).

People are influenced by the social validation of information. Communications accepted by the crowd are more believable by virtue of their popularity. The argument that the entire world, excepting the North Koreans and a few isolated groups, have abandoned socialism and adopted capitalism is a powerful argument against socialism. The North Korean press tries to counter this fact (which it has acknowledged on various occasions) by assuring its citizens that there are many “progressive” people in the world who are working and succeeding at establishing global socialism.

⁴⁹ A book-length presentation of Robert B. Cialdini's findings is his *Influence: Science and Practice* (New York: Harper Collins, 1988). A more concise and updated presentation is his chapter entitled “Interpersonal Influence” in Sharon Shavitt and Timothy C. Brock, eds., *Persuasion: Psychological Insights and Perspectives* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1994), pp. 195–217.

An object perceived to be in short supply becomes more highly valued. North Korea has successfully used this scarcity principle to make the infrequent foreign visitor appreciative of his opportunity to visit this closed society. Scarcity also works in the time dimension. Knowledge that there is only limited time remaining to achieve a goal, such as defecting to the South, can make that goal more attractive. The principle on which this scarcity effect is based is not clear. Part of it may be social validation (to the extent that the scarcity is caused by the popularity of the object). Part may be a result of "psychological reactance," the principle that people seek freedom from obvious constraints, such as imposed by the shortage of goods.

Perhaps the most obvious of all persuasive principles is the appeal to self-interest. This principle is in almost direct contradiction to communism, which teaches that people should work for the good of the community. Self-interest can be equated with selfishness, but need not be. The balance theory idea that we are good and therefore deserve good things supports the principle of deserving self-interest. Direct appeal to the North Koreans' self-interest is a powerful influence technique.

Finally, the principles of commitment and consistency, deriving directly from balance and dissonance theory, are strong persuaders. To be committed to a belief or line of behavior is universally commendable. To be consistent in behavior and attitude is likewise laudable and desirable, indicating responsibility and rational control over one's life. It has frequently been demonstrated that if people can be persuaded to take even a moderate position on an issue, they are open to further persuasion along the same line, having already made a commitment. The sense of commitment to socialism (sunk costs is part of it) that the North Korean people have displayed for 50 years (never mind that they had little choice) must be overcome by arguments that they have also demonstrated commitment to non-socialist principles, such as the black market.

3. Communism as Cult

It is frequently observed that North Korea is in some respects a national cult. To the extent this is true, a study of the psychology of cults ("new religious movements" in politically correct parlance) may provide some insight into the psychology of North Koreans and consequently aid in formulating methods to broaden or change their minds and prepare them for integration into the international community.

There are many striking parallels. Consider these descriptions of cults:⁵⁰

- In many religions, the individual ego is viewed as an island of selfishness, a delusion that separates seekers from God or prevents them from realizing their true nature.
- As [cult members] identify increasingly with the community, its strength becomes their strength.
- In a spiritual community, the smallest task is invested with meaning by virtue of its place in the divine plan. Having found work that is worthy of their efforts, members find in themselves surprising energy and discipline, and develop a sense of competence and self-worth. Enlightenment or utopia seems to be just around the corner.
- Once the sculpting [ideological indoctrination] has begun, it is difficult for members to reassess whether the sculptor is as skilled as they first thought and whether they like the image that is being created.
- If followers find something hard to accept, they blame their limited understanding.
- Any aberration or abuse has its “built-in” justification in the belief system surrounding the leader-follower relationship.
- Completely immersed in the group’s social reality, it is hard for members to trust their own perceptions when these are at odds with the community’s explanation.
- To varying degrees, groups see themselves as islands of light in a sea of darkness. Negative attitudes toward the outside world usually intensify over time so that groups become increasingly closed, even paranoid.
- When isolation is combined with the placement of absolute power in the hands of a single leader, the situation is ripe for abuse.
- Since the groups lack effective corrective mechanisms, abuses generally worsen over the years.

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Susan Rothbaum, “Between Two Worlds: Issues of Separation and Identity after Leaving a Religious Community,” in David G. Bromley, ed., *Falling from the Faith: Causes and Consequences of Religious Apostasy* (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1988), pp. 205–228; quotations from pp. 208–210.

Although the above descriptions of cult members may be apt in many cases, the theory of why and how people join cults, why they leave, or how they can be separated from cults is controversial. (The Moonies have been most extensively researched.) The theory that initially gained popularity was based on the "brainwashing" hypothesis of Edward Hunter, who described techniques developed in Stalinist Russia and imported to China before the Korean War.⁵¹ According to this model, individuals who undergo the three-stage process of confusion and breakdown (generally under conditions of isolation and duress), indoctrination, and finally social control through integration in a new community become programmed zombies.⁵² Although this conception remains popular in the news media and among the general public, an empirical examination of the model reveals serious flaws. Research conducted in the 1980s suggests that most people who join cults do so of their own volition after considerable searching for an alternative community. Moreover, most cults, no matter how aggressive their proselytizing, are spectacularly unsuccessful in recruiting and holding members, clearly a poor testimonial to the efficacy of indoctrination.⁵³

The anti-cult movement that sprang up in the late 1960s in response to growing parental concern over the departure from their homes of seemingly normal middle-class youth to new cult communities relied initially on a method of "deprogramming" to recapture these young people from the cults. The principal exponent of this rather aggressive procedure was Ted Patrick, whose co-authored book *Let Our Children Go!* published in 1976 outlined a counterbrainwashing technique that involved first abducting the cult member from his community and then subjecting him to round-the-clock indoctrination while being held incommunicado.⁵⁴ A later study of 397 cases of

⁵¹ Edward Hunter, *Brainwashing in China* (New York: Vanguard, 1951) and the author's *Brainwashing: from Pavlov to Power* (New York: The Bookmailer, 1956); discussed in James T. Richardson and Brook Kilbourne, "Classical and Contemporary Applications of Brainwashing Models: A Comparison and Critique," pp. 29-45; and in Trudy Solomon, "Programming and Deprogramming the Moonies: Social Psychology Applied," pp. 163-182, in David G. Bromley and James T. Richardson, eds., *The Brainwashing/Deprogramming Controversy: Sociological, Psychological, Legal and Historical Perspectives* (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1983).

⁵² See for example Richardson and Kilbourne, pp. 32-36. Following earlier writers, Lorne L. Dawson describes the three stages as "unfreezing," "changing," and "refreezing" in *Comprehending Cults: The Sociology of New Religious Movements* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 106-108.

⁵³ Figures from a variety of research studies suggest that over 90 percent of new recruits leave cults of their own volition within 2 years. See Lorne L. Dawson, p. 119; also Trudy Solomon, p. 181.

⁵⁴ Ted Patrick and Tom Dulack, *Let Our Children Go!* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1976); a good discussion of Patrick's work may be found in David G. Bromley, "Deprogramming as a Mode of Exit from New Religious Movements," in David G. Bromley, pp. 185-203.

deprogramming revealed a declining success rate with age: 83 percent success for 18 and 19 year olds but only 54 percent success for those 26 and over. Deprogramming was also more successful for those who had spent less time in the movement, with a 96 percent rate for those in the cult less than 2 months compared with 28 percent for those who had been with the cult for 4 years or more.⁵⁵

Because of legal problems involved in abducting and holding cult members, this aggressive deprogramming approach declined in popularity in the 1980s, to be replaced by a less aggressive more socially oriented "exit counseling" approach.⁵⁶ Cult members are no longer abducted. They may be approached by outsiders, most typically family or friends, who seek to "plant doubt and encourage reflection and analytic thinking."⁵⁷ No sustained effort is made to separate the cult member from the group until he begins to show disillusionment or is physically away from the group for a short period of time. The cult member is treated with respect as a person who has the capacity to make important decisions about his own life.

Differences between membership in cults (of course there are many kinds of cults) and citizenship in the DPRK are obviously great, but in both cases individuals experience isolation from the larger community and a constant bombardment of ideological propaganda centered around a quasi-divine leader. Just as abduction as a means of retrieving cult members has been judged a violation of domestic rights, intervention in North Korea's domestic affairs is likely to be judged a violation of the DPRK's sovereignty and may well elicit counterattacks from its government. But constant probing and contact may succeed just as well.

An important lesson of cult studies concerns the fate of members after they leave the cult. Susan Rothbaum, whose observations on cult characteristics were listed above, observes the following conditions at leave-taking:⁵⁸

- Leave-takers are well aware that they have failed to accomplish what they set out to do.

⁵⁵ David G. Bromley, p. 202.

⁵⁶ See for example Steven Hassan, "Strategic Intervention Therapy: A New Form of Exit-Counseling for Cult Members," in Anson Shupe and David G. Bromley, eds., *Anti-Cult Movements in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1994), pp. 103-125.

⁵⁷ Steven Hassan, p. 108.

⁵⁸ Susan Rothbaum, pp. 214-216.

- Many leave-takers find it hard to accept that the transition process takes time and requires a period of uncertainty about what will come next.
- They may emerge from the transition period discarding some aspects of the group's belief system and retaining others.
- Once outside, they remember the group's beautiful ideal vision and question their perceptions of the actual problems and pressures that drove them to leave.

An important part of communicating with North Koreans, especially the North Korean cadres, centers on how to prepare them to accept a new ideology and new norms after the demise of their socialist society. Preparation for this eventuality should begin as early as possible.

H. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The North Korean people are seriously deprived of domestic and foreign information. As a champion of freedom of the press, the United States could well consider it a duty to assist in providing the North Korean people with a free press. But Washington is unlikely to take up this mission unless other goals can be enlisted to support an information campaign.

The major goals of U.S. foreign policy are "to enhance our security with effective diplomacy and with military forces that are ready to fight and win," "to bolster America's economic prosperity" and "to promote democracy abroad."⁵⁹ The latter two goals are more than idealistic abstractions. Democracies tend to keep the peace among themselves, and market economies are more likely than socialist economies to prosper, thus reducing domestic strife and the need for foreign aid. Championing human rights, including the right to information, is also an important U.S. foreign policy goal, although arguably of secondary importance to most politicians in Washington. All these goals can be served by providing a more open information environment to the North Korean people.

Yet these important and laudable goals are not what motivate Washington's foreign policy toward the DPRK. More specific threats (as perceived) to the national

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A *National Security Strategy for a New Century* (Washington, DC: The White House, 1997), p. i. A list of security goals for East Asia includes "promotion of democracy." See *The United States Security Strategy for the East Asia-Pacific Region, 1998* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, Office of International Security Affairs, November 1998).

security of the United States and its allies are even higher on the agenda. First-order goals include freezing North Korea's nuclear and missile programs and combating North Korean-sponsored terrorism, drug manufacture and smuggling, hijacking, and counterfeiting. Since it is not immediately obvious how these goals can be achieved by providing North Koreans with a freer press, the emphasis of U.S. foreign policy has been on making nonproliferation deals with the Kim regime and bypassing its people. The only approach to the people has been to extend foreign aid to alleviate serious food shortages, but the aid is channeled through the World Food Program rather than coming directly from the United States.

Two questions regarding information access to North Korea need to be addressed: what goals should be sought and what means should be adopted to achieve those goals, including the question of how much emphasis to place on communication (news) versus persuasion (argument and opinion). Persuasion, when well directed and coordinated across sources, is the more useful approach to achieve specific foreign policy goals. But if goals are difficult to formulate, for example because of international or domestic policy disagreements, the relatively straightforward provision of information will prove to be the more appropriate form of communication, with consequences (in terms of a more open North Korean society) following slowly and naturally from the creation of an enlightened populace.

Specific goals of the sort that would be sought in psychological warfare or psychological operations are not considered in this paper, although the United States has considerable experience with such operations, for example during World War II and the Vietnam War. Psychological operations goals might include denigrating Kim Jong-il, lowering military morale, promoting dissident groups, and countering the North Korean press image of the United States as an imperialist power.

One complicating factor involved in communicating to North Koreans is that South Korea is the country most directly affected by conditions in the DPRK. It follows that the ROK should take primary responsibility for implementing any campaign that will influence inter-Korean relations. In the Vietnam war the United States learned the futility of trying to wage a surrogate propaganda campaign on behalf of a foreign government.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Robert W. Chandler, *War of Ideas: The U.S. Propaganda Campaign in Vietnam* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1981), p. 253.

In the long term the goals of the ROK and the United States in regard to North Korea are compatible but not identical. Both governments wish to see democracy and market principles developed in the North in preparation for Korean unification. In the short term, however, the two governments have somewhat different concerns. It is obvious from the content of present and past negotiations that the primary U.S. objective is to freeze the North's WMD programs. The United States has even threatened to take military action in order to achieve this goal. Such belligerence contradicts the ROK's primary goal of maintaining peace on the peninsula.

ROK President Kim Dae-jung's engagement policy aims to promote exchanges of people and develop the North Korean economy so that eventual unification will not place an unbearable strain on the South Korean economy. He does not wish for an early unification (he has mentioned a timetable of 25 years) nor does he seek a collapse of the North Korean system, for the ROK is not prepared to cope with either contingency. Although in earlier days Kim Dae-jung was himself a victim of the ROK government's human and political rights violations, he has not pursued a human rights agenda with North Korea, apparently considering it to be a provocative and in any case futile campaign at this stage in North-South relations.⁶¹

There is little consensus in the United States on how to handle the DPRK. In the U.S. Congress dissatisfaction with the Clinton administration's engagement policy has ebbed and flowed. In South Korea, while most of the population is behind President Kim's engagement policy, many hardliners continue to distrust the North, accusing the president of appeasing and strengthening the regime in Pyongyang.

In pursuit of their primary goals—Washington's WMD containment and Seoul's political and economic reconciliation—the two governments have engaged in high politics, going over the heads of the North Korean people to deal with their leader. This approach, typical of *Realpolitik* as it has been practiced for centuries, leaves little room for such "soft" campaigns as human rights and freedom of the press. Yet the political and moral costs of dealing with a totalitarian regime often become apparent at a later date.

⁶¹ President Kim is quoted by the ROK press as saying that "The interest of the international community in North Korea's human rights conditions may have a limited effect, but it would be difficult to produce significant results under any circumstances." President Kim considers that eradicating poverty in the North should take priority. *The Korea Herald* (Internet version), February 29, 2000.

1. Challenges

Apart from the difficulty of breaching the North Korean jamming and censorship barrier, success in informing and persuading the North Korean people will be hindered by numerous factors.

The experience of sunk costs is one such factor. Both the masses and cadres have suffered for many years on their "arduous march" to socialist victory. To admit defeat after half a century of struggle will be difficult. The teachings of Confucian loyalty also militate against acceptance of foreign-sourced information. The Kims built their personality cults on the foundation of Korea's strong Confucian tradition. Most people believe that loyalty to the group and its leader is a cardinal virtue, and this belief provides a strong basis of nationalism and support for the Kim regime. Confucian beliefs also restrain North Koreans' freedom of action in another important way: in North Korea if a person is accused (never mind convicted) of an anti-regime crime, he and his entire family, sometimes including distant relatives, will be punished. Confucian-based family loyalty thus provides strong motivation not to protest against the regime.

North Koreans are rightly proud of their independence, a core meaning of *Juche*. They are taught that the only alternative to *Juche* is *Sadae*, that is, flunkeyism and dependence on outside powers. Since the United States has maintained a significant military and civilian presence in South Korea, a presence that might give the appearance of colonial occupation or control, South Korean society presents a flawed alternative model to North Koreans, just as the former Republic of Vietnam presented a flawed model of governance during the days when American propagandists were trying to persuade communists to come over to the South Vietnamese side.

Educating the North Korean masses about outside realities is also made difficult by the Kim regime's use of forewarning and inoculation. People have been warned that the foreigners will paint a rosy but false picture of life in their countries. For example, North Koreans are told that while citizens in capitalist countries can in theory go to the polls, "if one has no money, he cannot take part in election campaigns . . . the working people are not allowed to elect persons who will represent their will and interests."⁶²

⁶² "Deceptive Nature of Freedom of Ideology Chanted by Imperialists," KCNA report on a *Nodong Sinmun* article of June 29, 1995; transcribed by FBIS-EAS-95-125 (June 29, 1995) and entitled "'Deceptive Nature' of Imperialists' Freedom Noted," p. 33.

2. Recommendations

The ultimate goal of American and South Korean engagement with North Korea is to transform the North into a peaceful and democratic society. Such a transformation could be achieved if engagement changed Kim Jong-il's attitudes toward governance and foreign policy. The transformation could also be achieved if engagement inspired the North Korean people to overthrow the Kim regime.

The politically correct assumption is that Kim will be softened by foreign overtures and will decide to loosen his grip over his people. Based on this assumption, the more good things that can be delivered to Kim, the more likely North Korea will change. It is possible, however, that Kim will use whatever inducements he receives to strengthen his position, and that any change that takes place in North Korea will have to come from the bottom up. If this view is correct, a more vigorous approach to the North Korean people should be made, bypassing their leaders. The following recommendations are based on this second theory.

North Koreans are difficult to reach. Although person-to-person channels have the greatest impact and potential for transmitting the most information, the North Korean government exercises quite effective control over them. The channels that the United States can exercise most control over are foreign broadcasts and information accompanying the aid that has been solicited by the North Korean government.

Given that ROK and U.S. goals in North Korea are not identical, and that the ROK is considered to be an important regional ally, it would be wise to avoid engaging in overtly persuasive efforts toward North Korea, especially the kind that aim for an overthrow of the Kim regime or that might precipitate a social implosion, since neither goal is desired by the current ROK government. A news and information approach would be less provocative.

Interestingly, neither VOA nor RFA devotes significant resources to their North Korean broadcasts despite the fact that for years North Korea has been listed as a major threat to U.S. security and to the peace of Northeast Asia. Korean broadcasts receive the same resources as broadcasts to Burma and Laos. Perhaps this discrepancy between threat and response is an oversight. Perhaps it is a reflection of *Realpolitik* pessimism about the ability of propaganda to affect international relations (despite the widespread use of similar propaganda techniques in domestic marketing). A conspiratorial view (taken up by the North Korean press) is that constituencies in the U.S. government need a North Korean threat to justify defense expenditures. Interestingly, the Clinton

administration reportedly spent \$77 million to influence the political process in Serbia (that is, overthrow the Milosevic regime) even though that regime never presented a security threat to the United States and did not commit the same magnitude of human rights violations as does the North Korean regime.⁶³ Given the minimal cost of an enhanced North Korea communication campaign compared with the cost of a national missile defense system, it would seem that such a campaign, even if it is only mildly effective in weakening the Kim regime, would be cost effective.

Turning to the content of a communication campaign, international news from the major wire services should be an important part of any information campaign, as this news will provide the North Korean people with a standard of comparison for their own lives. Domestic North Korean news, the purview of RFA, should be enhanced, for as it now stands little RFA news is sourced from the DPRK. A readily available source is KCNA, the North's foreign-language news agency, which broadcasts many items withheld by the domestic broadcast network, KCBN.

Experience gained from Cold War broadcasts to Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union suggests that "market basket" issues are of greater importance to most listeners than are ideological issues. A relentless stream of information about the standard of living in non-socialist countries would be appropriate. News about how natural disasters are routinely overcome in other countries would counter the North Korean government's perennial use of the weather as an excuse for food shortages.

Communication and persuasion research can provide useful insights on how to present material to a North Korean audience. Using information from KCNA or from Chinese or Soviet sources will provide a measure of source credibility. Employing broadcasters who speak the North Korean dialect will demonstrate similarity to the audience. American disinterest in subverting North Korea's system for imperialistic purposes can be communicated by reminding the North Koreans that their economy is too poor and backward to be of interest to developed economies. Programs ostensibly targeted at Koreans in China and Russia rather than North Korea could provide an "overheard" effect that should give the programs greater credibility to domestic North Koreans. Acknowledging the severe hardships faced by ordinary North Koreans will remind them that they have not been forgotten by the outside world.

⁶³ The budget figure is reported by John Lancaster, "U.S. Funds Help Milosevic's Foes in Election Fight," *The Washington Post*, September 19, 2000, p. A1.

Employing the principles of cognitive response will make information more credible, memorable, and relevant to the lives of North Koreans. For example, providing information from a wide variety of sources, including China and the Soviet Union, will confer social validation. Asking listeners to question the consistency of the information they have received from North Korean government sources will keep North Korean propagandists on the defensive. A special effort should be made to show how belief in national pride and self-reliance is consistent with globalization.

Audience feedback from North Korea should be more vigorously and systematically pursued by interviewing more defectors to South Korea (who number in the hundreds) and interviewing more North Korean refugees in China (who number in the thousands).

Since the North Korean elite already have considerable access to news, the target audience of an enhanced communication campaign should be the masses. Although they exercise little political power, they have tremendous potential power. If the North Korean problem is ultimately resolved by peaceful reunification, information delivered to the masses will help them cope with reunification and adapt to the global community. Not incidentally, such information will make it easier for the United States to establish cordial relations with a unified Korea.

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